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COLERIDGE'S

ECTURES AND NOTES ON SHAKSPERE AND OTHER ENGLISH POETS.

LECTURES AND NOTES ON SHAKSPERE AND OTHER ENGLISH POETS.

87146

BY

SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE.

NOW FIRST COLLECTED,

BY

T. ASHE, B.A.,
OF ST. JOHN'S COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE,
Author of "Songs Now and Then," "The Sorrows of Hypsipyle," &c.

JJA.K64

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PREFACE.

ALL the extant criticism of Coleridge on the English Dramatists is collected, for the first time, in this volume, and numerous criticisms of his, on other English Poets, have in it been rescued from obscurity, in the form of notes or otherwise.

Our thanks are especially due to Mr. Collier, for allowing us to reprint his transcripts; to Messrs. Macmillan, for the privilege, willingly accorded, of making free use of Crabb Robinson's Diary; and to Mr. George, of Bristol, without whose friendly and invaluable co-operation we should not have recovered the reports of the Bristol Lectures.

Sept., 1883.

*** Mr. Collier has passed beyond reach of our thanks, in his ninety fifth year. (*Sept.* 18, 1883).

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I.

LECTURES ON SHAKSPERE AND MILTON.

1811-12.

INTRODUCTORY.

§ 1.—*Mr. Collier's Transcripts.*

COLERIDGE, then in his fortieth year, delivered a course of lectures in the winter of 1811-12, in the Hall of the London Philosophical Society.[1] The lectures mainly dealt with Shakspere, but two or three were on Milton, and the first discussed the general principles of poetry; as, indeed, did they all, more or less. They were given on Monday and Thursday evenings, and were to have been fifteen in number. The course extended, however, to seventeen, and allowing for a probable interval at Christmas, must have been little interrupted; for the first duly came off on the 18th of November, as announced, and the last on January 27th.

As any remains of this course are valuable, it is unfortunate we have so few. These, such as they are, consist of contemporary newspaper notices, of some interesting memoranda in H. Crabb Robinson's Diary, and of transcripts from shorthand notes, by Mr. J. Payne Collier, of the 1st, 2nd, 6th, 7th, 9th, and 12th lectures, and part of the 8th.

Mr. Collier published these transcripts in 1856, having discovered, a few years before, a portion of his notes, all of which, whatever they had been originally, up to that time had been mislaid. The transcripts must be somewhat

[1] This Society was dissolved in 1820.

meagre. The first lecture, for instance, as given by Mr. Collier, could be read aloud in a quarter of an hour.[1] The later ones are more complete. It would, however, be most unnatural not to feel a deep sense of gratitude to Mr. Collier; for, apart from the fact that his transcripts contain much precious matter, they are practically all the lectures we possess. Only a small portion of the second division of our book can correctly be called lectures.

The volume in which Mr. Collier's transcripts first appeared in a complete form, contains much other matter. We proceed to extract, with his kind permission, such portions of his preface as illustrate our subject.

Mr. Collier recounts the history of his transcripts as follows:—

"The lectures are, as nearly as possible, transcripts of my own short-hand notes, taken at the close of the year 1811, and at the opening of the year 1812.

"I am fully aware that my memoranda, of forty-five years standing, are more or less imperfect: of some of the lectures I appear to have made only abridged sketches; of others my notes are much fuller and more extended; but I am certain, even at this distance of time, that I did not knowingly register a sentence, that did not come from Coleridge's lips, although doubtless I missed, omitted, and mistook points and passages, which now I should have been most rejoiced to have preserved. In completing my transcripts, however, I have added no word or syllable of my own.

"I was a very young man when I attended the lectures in question; but I was not only an enthusiast in all that related to Shakspere and his literary contemporaries, but a warm admirer of Coleridge, and a firm believer in his power of opening my faculties

[1] And Coleridge's lectures were not short. Dr. Dibdin, in "Reminiscences of a Literary Life," relates that he attended one at the Royal Institution, and states that "for nearly two hours he," Coleridge, "spoke with unhesitating and uninterrupted fluency."

to the comprehension, and enjoyment of poetry, in a degree beyond anything that I had then experienced. I had seen something of him, and had heard more about him; and when my father proposed that all his family, old enough to profit by them, should attend the lectures advertised in 1811, I seized the opportunity with eagerness. The series was delivered extemporaneously (almost without the assistance of notes) in a large room at what was called the Scot's Corporation Hall, in Crane Court, Fleet Street; and on applying for tickets, Coleridge sent us a copy of his prospectus, which, many years afterwards, I was glad to see I had accidentally preserved, and which was in the following form:—

LONDON PHILOSOPHICAL SOCIETY,

SCOT'S CORPORATION HALL,

CRANE COURT, FLEET STREET,

(ENTRANCE FROM FETTER LANE.)

MR. COLERIDGE

WILL COMMENCE

ON MONDAY, NOV. 18th,

A COURSE OF LECTURES ON SHAKESPEAR AND MILTON,

IN ILLUSTRATION OF

THE PRINCIPLES OF POETRY,

AND THEIR

Application as Grounds of Criticism to the most popular Works of later English Poets, those of the Living included.

After an introductory Lecture on False Criticism, (especially in Poetry,) and on its Causes: two thirds of the remaining course, will be assigned, 1st, to a philosophic Analysis and Explanation of all the principal *Characters* of our great Dramatist, as Othello, Falstaff, Richard 3d, Iago, Hamlet, &c.; and 2nd, to a critical *Comparison* of Shakespear, in respect of Diction, Imagery, management of the Passions, Judgment in the construction of his Dramas, in short, of all that belongs to him as a Poet, and as a dramatic Poet, with his contemporaries, or immediate successors, Jonson, Beaumont and Fletcher, Ford, Massinger, &c. in the endeavour to determine what of Shakespear's Merits and Defects are common to him with other Writers of the same age, and what remain peculiar to his own Genius.

The Course will extend to fifteen Lectures, which will be given on Monday and Thursday evenings successively. The Lectures to commence at ½ past 7 o'clock.

Single Tickets for the whole Course, 2 Guineas; or 3 Guineas with the privilege of introducing a Lady: may be procured at J. Hatchard's, 190, Piccadilly; J. Murray's, Fleet Street; J. and A. Arch's, Booksellers and Stationers, Cornhill; Godwin's Juvenile Library, Skinner Street; W. Pople's, 67, Chancery Lane; or by Letter (post paid) to Mr. S. T. Coleridge, J. J. Morgan's, Esq. No. 7, Portland Place, Hammersmith.

W. Pople, Printer, Chancery Lane, London.

After expressing a doubt about the number of weeks the delivery of Coleridge's lectures actually covered—a point the dates we have given above from the "Times" set at rest—Mr. Collier makes declaration, in reply to an anonymous writer,[1] who had charged him with inventing them, that his short-hand notes were taken at the time. There seems no reason whatever to doubt this. The contemporary notices in the papers fairly establish, by their resemblance, the genuineness of the transcripts.

"My original notes (he continues) were taken at the close of 1811 and at the opening of 1812. I endeavoured in the interval between each lecture to transcribe them; but, from other avocations, I was unable to keep pace with the delivery, and at the termination of the course I must have been considerably in arrear: while I am writing I have two of my short-hand books (sheets of paper stitched together) before me, which remained undeciphered from 1812 until 1854,—a period of forty-two years. During the whole time I did not know what had become of any of them. I attended another course by the same lecturer in 1818, of which I had taken and preserved only a few scattered excerpts; and I cannot call to mind whether, even at that date, my notes of the previous lectures of 1811-12 were forthcoming. I know that I afterwards searched for them several times unsuccessfully; and with great diligence about the year 1842, when I was engaged in preparing a new edition of Shakspere, to which I apprehended the opinions of Coleridge on the different plays would have been an important recommendation.[2] I again failed to find them, and in 1850 I took up my residence in the country, carrying with me only such furniture as I required, and among it a double chest of drawers, in the highest part of which I subsequently discovered some of, but, I lament to say, by no means all, my lost

[1] In a brochure entitled "Literary Cookery," which was withdrawn. Mr. Collier had supplied some portions of his transcripts to "Notes and Queries," before their publication in 1856.

[2] The second portion of this volume was, however, already published at that date.

notes. Even these were not brought to light until I was preparing to remove to my present residence, and was employing myself in turning out waste paper and worthless relics from every receptacle.

"As doubt, however unfairly and unjustifiably, has been cast on my re-acquisition of these materials, I will just state, with some particularity, of what they consist.

1. Several brochures and fragments of a Diary in my own handwriting, not at all regularly kept, and the earliest entry in which is 10th October, without the year, but unquestionably 1811.

2. Five other small brochures, containing partial transcripts, in long-hand, of Coleridge's first, second, sixth, and eighth lectures.

3. Several brochures, and parts of brochures, of my original short-hand notes, two of which (those of the ninth and twelfth lectures) were complete, but entirely untranscribed.

"On turning out these papers from the upper drawer, where they must have been deposited for many years, I looked anxiously for the rest of the series of lectures, but in vain, and to this day I have recovered no more. . . . . The early transcripts were not in the first person: they, as it were, narrated the observations and criticisms of Coleridge, with constant repetitions of "he said," "he remarked," "he quoted," &c. On the other hand, my original notes, taken down from the lips of the lecturer, were, of course, in the first person.—"I beg you to observe," "it is my opinion," "we are struck," &c. I therefore re-wrote the whole, comparing my recovered transcripts with my short-hand notes (where I had them) as I proceeded, and putting the earliest lectures as well as the latest, in the first instead of the third person; thus making them consistent with each other, and more conformable to the very words Coleridge had employed.

"These are what are now offered to the reader. I cannot but be sensible of their many and great imperfections: they are, I am sure, full of omissions, owing in some degree to want of facility on my part; in a greater degree, perhaps, to a mistaken estimate of what it was, or was not, expedient to minute; and in no little proportion to the fact, that in some cases I relied upon my recollection to fill up chasms in my memoranda. A few defects may be attributed to the inconvenience of my position among other auditors (though the lectures were not always very fully attended), and others to the plain fact, that I was not un-

frequently so engrossed, and absorbed by the almost inspired look and manner of the speaker, that I was, for a time, incapable of performing the mechanical duty of writing. I present my notes merely as they are, doing, I know, great injustice to the man and to the subject, but at the same time preserving many criticisms, observations, and opinions, well worthy of attention from their truth, their eloquence, and their originality."

§ 2.—*Criticisms by Coleridge from Mr. Collier's Diary.*

Mr. Collier furnishes numerous extracts from the Diary which he kept in 1811. Such portions of them as fall within our scope, are here given. A few are rescued from forgetfulness, which hardly do so.

"*Sunday, 13th Oct.*—In a conversation at my father's, a little while since, he gave the following character of Falstaff, which I wrote down very soon after it was delivered.

"Falstaff was no coward, but pretended to be one merely for the sake of trying experiments on the credulity of mankind: he was a liar with the same object, and not because he loved falsehood for itself. He was a man of such pre-eminent abilities, as to give him a profound contempt for all those by whom he was usually surrounded, and to lead to a determination on his part, in spite of their fancied superiority, to make them his tools and dupes. He knew, however low he descended, that his own talents would raise him, and extricate him from any difficulty. While he was thought to be the greatest rogue, thief, and liar, he still had that about him which could render him not only respectable, but absolutely necessary to his companions. It was in characters of complete moral depravity, but of first-rate wit and talents, that Shakspere delighted: and Coleridge instanced Richard the Third, Falstaff, and Iago.

"Coleridge was recently asked his opinion as to the order in which Shakspere had written his plays. His answer was to this effect, as well as I can remember:—that although Malone had collected a great many external particulars regarding the age of each play, they were all, in Coleridge's mind, much less satisfactory than the knowledge to be obtained from internal evidence. If he were to adopt any theory upon the subject, it would rather

be physiological and pathological than chronological. There appeared to be three stages in Shakspere's genius; it did not seem as if in the outset he thought his ability of a dramatic kind, excepting perhaps as an actor, in which, like many others, he had been somewhat mistaken, though by no means so much as it was the custom to believe. Hence his two poems, 'Venus and Adonis,' and 'Lucrece,' both of a narrative character, which must have been written very early: the first, at all events, must have been produced in the country, amid country scenes, sights and employments; but the last had more the air of a city, and of society."

Mr. Collier produces a note here, of doubtful date, of some remarks of Coleridge on Shakspere as an actor:—

"It is my persuasion—indeed my firm conviction—so firm that nothing can shake it—the rising of Shakspere's spirit from the grave, modestly confessing his own deficiencies, could not alter my opinion—that Shakspere, in the best sense of the word, was a very great actor; nothing can exceed the judgment he displays upon that subject. He may not have had the physical advantages of Burbage or Field; but they would never have become what they were without his most able and sagacious instructions; and what would either of them have been without Shakspere's plays? Great dramatists make great actors. But looking at him merely as a performer, I am certain that he was greater as *Adam*, in 'As you Like It,' than Burbage, as *Hamlet*, or *Richard the Third*. Think of the scene between him and *Orlando*; and think again, that the actor of that part had to carry the author of that play in his arms! Think of having had Shakspere in one's arms! It is worth having died two hundred years ago to have heard Shakspere deliver a single line. He must have been a great actor."

The entry of the 13th Oct. thus continues:—

"With regard to his dramas, they might easily be placed in groups. 'Titus Andronicus' would, in some sort, stand alone, because it was obviously intended to excite vulgar audiences by its scenes of blood and horror—to our ears shocking and disgusting. This was the fashion of plays in Shakspere's youth; but the taste, if such indeed it were, soon disappeared, as it was sure to do with a man of his character of mind; and then followed, probably, that

beautiful love-poem 'Romeo and Juliet,' and 'Love's Labour's Lost,' made up entirely of the same passion. These might be succeeded by 'All's Well that Ends Well,' not an agreeable story, but still full of love; and by 'As You Like It,' not Shakspere's invention as to plot, but entirely his own as to dialogue, with all the vivacity of wit, and the elasticity of youth and animal spirits. No man, even in the middle period of life, he thought, could have produced it. 'Midsummer Night's Dream' and 'Twelfth Night' hardly appeared to belong to the complete maturity of his genius: Shakspere was then ripening his powers for such works as 'Troilus and Cressida,' 'Coriolanus,' 'Julius Cæsar,' 'Cymbeline,' and 'Othello.' Coleridge professed that he could not yet make up his mind to assign a period to 'The Merchant of Venice,' to 'Much Ado about Nothing,' nor to 'Measure for Measure;' but he was convinced that 'Antony and Cleopatra,' 'Hamlet,' 'Macbeth,' 'Lear,' 'The Tempest,' and 'The Winter's Tale,' were late productions,—especially 'The Winter's Tale.' These belonged to the third group.

"When asked what he would do with the historical plays, he replied that he was much at a loss. Historical plays had been written and acted before Shakspere took up those subjects; and there was no doubt whatever that his contributions to the three parts of 'Henry VI.' were very small; indeed he doubted, in opposition to Malone, whether he had had anything to do with the first part of 'Henry VI.:' if he had, it must have been extremely early in his career. 'Richard II.' and 'Richard III.'—noble plays, and the finest specimens of their kind—must have preceded the two parts of 'Henry IV.;' and 'Henry VIII.' was decidedly a late play. Dramas of this description ought to be treated by themselves; they were neither tragedy nor comedy, and yet at times both. Though far from accurate as to events, in point of character they were the essential truth of history. 'Let no man (said Coleridge) blame his son for learning history from Shakspere.'

"He did not agree with some Germans (whom he had heard talk upon the subject) that Shakspere had had much to do with the doubtful plays imputed to him in the third folio: on the contrary, he was sure that, if he had touched any of them, it was only very lightly and rarely. Being asked whether he included 'The Two Noble Kinsmen' among the doubtful plays, he answered, 'Decidedly not: there is the clearest internal evidence

that Shakspere importantly aided Fletcher in the composition of it. Parts are most unlike Fletcher, yet most like Shakspere, while other parts are most like Fletcher, and most unlike Shakspere. The mad scenes of the Jailor's daughter are coarsely imitated, from 'Hamlet;' those were by Fletcher, and so very inferior, that I wonder how he could so far condescend. Shakspere would never have imitated himself at all, much less so badly. There is no finer, or more characteristic dramatic writing than some scenes in 'The Two Noble Kinsmen.'"

"*Thursday, 17th Oct.*—Yesterday, at Lamb's, I met Coleridge again. I expected to see him there, and I made up my mind that I would remember as much as possible of what he said.

"He said that Shakspere was almost the only dramatic poet, who by his characters represented a class, and not an individual: other writers for the stage, and in other respects good ones too, had aimed their satire and ridicule at particular foibles and particular persons, while Shakspere at one stroke lashed thousands: Shakspere struck at a crowd; Jonson picked out no especial object for his attack. Coleridge drew a parallel between Shakspere and a geometrician: the latter, when tracing a circle, had his eye upon the centre as the important point, but included also in his vision a wide circumference; so Shakspere, while his eye rested upon an individual character, always embraced a wide circumference of others, without diminishing the separate interest he intended to attach to the being he pourtrayed. Othello was a personage of this description: but all Shakspere's chief characters possessed, in a greater or less degree, this claim to our admiration. He was not a mere painter of portraits, with the dress, features, and peculiarities of the sitter: but a painter of likenesses so true that, although nobody could perhaps say they knew the very person represented, all saw at once that it was faithful, and that it must be a likeness.

"Lamb led Coleridge on to speak of Beaumont and Fletcher: he highly extolled their comedies in many respects, especially for the vivacity of the dialogue, but he contended that their tragedies were liable to grave objections. They always proceeded upon something forced and unnatural; the reader never can reconcile the plot with probability, and sometimes not with possibility. One of their tragedies was founded upon this:—A lady expresses a wish to possess the heart of her lover, terms which that lover understands, all the way through, in a literal sense; and nothing

can satisfy him but tearing out his heart, and having it presented to the heroine, in order to secure her affections, after he was past the enjoyment of them.[1] Their comedies, however, were much superior, and at times, and excepting in the generalization of humour and application, almost rivalled those of Shakspere. The situations are sometimes so disgusting, and the language so indecent and immoral, that it is impossible to read the plays in private society. The difference in this respect between Shakspere and Beaumont and Fletcher (speaking of them in their joint capacity) is, that Shakspere always makes vice odious and virtue admirable, while Beaumont and Fletcher do the very reverse—they ridicule virtue and encourage vice: they pander to the lowest and basest passions of our nature.

"Coleridge afterwards made some remarks upon more modern dramatists, and was especially severe upon Dryden, who could degrade his fine intellect, and debase his noble use of the English language in such plays as 'All for Love,' and 'Sebastian,' down to 'Limberham,' and 'The Spanish Friar.' He spoke also of Moore's 'Gamester,' and applauded warmly the acting of Mrs. Siddons. He admitted that the situations were affecting, but maintained that the language of the tragedy was below criticism: it was about upon a par with Kotzebue. It was extremely natural for any one to shed tears at seeing a beautiful woman in the depths of anguish and despair, when she beheld her husband, who had ruined himself by gambling, dying of poison at the very moment he had come into a large fortune, which would have paid all his debts, and enabled him to live in affluence and happiness. 'This (said Coleridge) reminds one of the modern termination of "Romeo and Juliet,"—I mean the way in which Garrick, or somebody else, terminated it,—so that Juliet should revive before the death of Romeo, and just in time to be not in time, but to find that he had swallowed a mortal poison. I know that this conclusion is consistent with the old novel upon which the tragedy is founded, but a narrative is one thing and a drama another, and Shakspere's judgment revolted at such situations on the stage. To be sure they produce tears, and so does a blunt razor shaving the upper lip.'

"From hence the conversation diverged to other topics; and

[1] The tragedy here referred to by Coleridge is "The Mad Lover."—J. P. C.

Southey's 'Curse of Kehama' having been introduced by one of the company, Coleridge admitted that it was a poem of great talent and ingenuity. Being asked whether he could give it no higher praise, he answered, that it did the greatest credit to the abilities of Southey, but that there were two things in it utterly incompatible. From the nature of the story, it was absolutely necessary that the reader should imagine himself enjoying one of the wildest dreams of a poet's fancy; and at the same time it was required of him (which was impossible) that he should believe that the soul of the hero, such as he was depicted, was alive to all the feelings and sympathies of tenderness and affection. The reader was called upon to believe in the possibility of the existence of an almighty man, who had extorted from heaven the power he possessed, and who was detestable for his crimes, and yet who should be capable of all the delicate sensibilities subsisting between parent and child, oppressed, injured, and punished. Such a being was not in human nature. The design and purpose were excellent, namely, to show the superiority of moral to physical power.

"He looked upon 'The Curse of Kehama' as a work of great talent, but not of much genius; and he drew the distinction between talent and genius by comparing the first to a watch and the last to an eye: both were beautiful, but one was only a piece of ingenious mechanism, while the other was a production above all art. Talent was a manufacture; genius a gift that no labour nor study could supply: nobody could make an eye, but anybody, duly instructed, could make a watch. It was suggested by one of the company, that more credit was given to Southey for imagination in that poem than was due to him, since he had derived so much from the extravagances of Hindu mythology. Coleridge replied, that the story was the work of the poet, and that much of the mythology was his also: having invented his tale, Southey wanted to reconcile it with probability, according to some theory or other, and therefore resorted to oriental fiction. He had picked up his mythology from books, as it were by scraps, and had tacked and fitted them together with much skill, and with such additions as his wants and wishes dictated.

"The conversation then turned upon Walter Scott, whose 'Lady of the Lake' has recently been published, and I own that there appeared on the part of Coleridge some disposition, if not to

disparage, at least not to recognize the merits of Scott. He professed himself comparatively ignorant of Scott's productions, and stated that 'The Lady of the Lake' had been lying on his table for more than a month, and that he had only been able to get through two divisions of the poem, and had there found many grammatical blunders, and expressions that were not English on this side of the Tweed—nor, indeed, on the other. If (added he) I were called upon to form an opinion of Mr. Scott's poetry, the first thing I should do would be to take away all his names of old castles, which rhyme very prettily, and read very picturesquely; then, I would remove out of the poem all the old armour and weapons; next, I would exclude the mention of all nunneries, abbeys, and priories, and I should then see what would be the residuum—how much poetry would remain. At present, having read so little of what he has produced, I can form no competent opinion; but I should then be able to ascertain what was the story or fable (for which I give him full credit, because, I dare say, it is very interesting), what degree of imagination was displayed in narrating it, and how far he was to be admired for propriety and felicity of expression. Of these, at present, others must judge, but I would rather have written one simile by Burns,—

> "'Like snow that falls upon a river,
> A moment white, then gone for ever,"—

than all the poetry that his countryman Scott—as far as I am yet able to form an estimate—is likely to produce.

"Milton's 'Samson Agonistes' being introduced as a topic, Coleridge said, with becoming emphasis, that it was the finest imitation of the ancient Greek drama that ever had been, or ever would be written. One of the company remarked that Steevens (the commentator on Shakspere) had asserted that 'Samson Agonistes' was formed on the model of the ancient Mysteries, the origin of our English drama; upon which Coleridge burst forth with unusual vehemence against Steevens, asserting that he was no more competent to appreciate Shakspere and Milton, than to form an idea of the grandeur and glory of the seventh heavens. He would require (added Coleridge) a telescope of more than Herschellian power to enable him, with his contracted intellectual vision, to see half a quarter as far: the end of his nose is the

utmost extent of that man's ordinary sight, and even then he cannot comprehend what he sees."

"29*th October*.—Coleridge told us (though I fancy, from his indecision of character, that it may turn out a mere project—I hope not) that he means very soon to give a series of lectures at Coachmakers' Hall, mainly upon Poetry, with a view to erect some standard by which all writers of verse may be measured and ranked. He added, that many of his friends had advised him to take this step, and for his own part he was not at all unwilling to comply with their wishes. His lectures would, necessarily, embrace criticisms on Shakspere, Milton, and all the chief and most popular poets of our language, from Chaucer, for whom he had great reverence, down to Campbell, for whom he had little admiration. He thought that something of the kind was much needed, in order to settle people's notions as to what was, or was not good poetry, and who was, or was not a good poet. He talked of carrying out this scheme next month.

"He mentioned, as indeed we knew, that last year he had delivered Lectures upon Poetry at the Royal Institution: for the first of the series he had prepared himself fully, and when it was over he received many high-flown, but frigid compliments, evidently, like his lecture, studied. For the second lecture he had prepared himself less elaborately, and was much applauded.[1] For the third lecture, and indeed for the remainder of the course, he made no preparation, and was liked better than ever, and vociferously and heartily cheered. The reason was obvious, for what came warm from the heart of the speaker, went warm to the heart of the hearer; and although the illustrations might not be so good, yet being extemporaneous, and often from objects immediately before the eyes, they made more impression, and seemed to have more aptitude."

These lectures, Mr. Collier here explains, were actually our lectures of 1811-12, which were delivered, however, at the Scot's Corporation Hall, Crane Court, Fleet Street.

"1*st November*.—Again I saw Coleridge, and again I was an attentive listener. He once more quoted his favourite simile from Burns, in order to establish the position, that one of the purposes

[1] Coleridge repeats this in the Sixth Lecture.

and tests of true poetry was the employment of common objects in uncommon ways—the felicitous and novel use of images of daily occurrence. Everybody had seen snow falling upon a river, and vanishing instantly, but who had applied this result of ordinary experience with such novelty and beauty?

"Shakspere (said Coleridge) is full of these familiar images and illustrations; Milton has them too, but they do not occur so frequently, because his subject does not so naturally call for them. He is the truest poet who can apply to a new purpose the oldest occurrences and most usual appearances: the justice of the images can then always be felt and appreciated.

"Adverting to his contemporaries, he told us that, of course, he knew nearly every line Southey had written, but he repeated that he was far from well read in Scott, whom he now said he personally liked, adding that he had just finished Campbell's 'Gertrude of Wyoming:' though personally he did not much relish the author, he admitted that his poem contained very pretty stanzas. He disclaimed all envy: each of the three had met with more success than he should ever arrive at; but that success was quite as much owing to their faults as to their excellences. He did not generally like to speak of his contemporaries, but if he did speak of them, he must give his fair opinion, and that opinion was, that not one of the three—neither Southey, Scott, nor Campbell—would by their poetry survive much beyond the day when they lived and wrote. Their works seemed to him not to have the seeds of vitality, the real germs of long life. The two first were entertaining as tellers of stories in verse; but the last in his 'Pleasures of Hope' obviously had no fixed design, but when a thought (of course, not a very original one) came into his head, he put it down in couplets, and afterwards strung the *disjecta membra* (not *poetæ*) together. Some of the best things in it were borrowed: for instance, the line—

"'And Freedom shriek'd when Kosciusko fell'—

was taken from a much ridiculed piece by Dennis, a pindaric on William III.,

"'Fair Liberty shriek'd out aloud, aloud Religion groan'd.'

It is the same production in which the following much-laughed-at specimen of bathos is found:—

"'Nor Alps nor Pyreneans keep him out,
Nor fortified redoubt.'

Coleridge had little toleration for Campbell, and considered him, as far as he had gone, a mere verse-maker. Southey was, in some sort, like an elegant setter of jewels; the stones were not his own: he gave them all the advantage of his art—the charm of his workmanship (and that charm was great), but not their native brilliancy. Wordsworth was not popular, and never would be so, for this reason among others—that he was a better poet than the rest. Yet Wordsworth liked popularity, and would fain be popular, if he could."

Lastly we have extracts from a second entry of doubtful date:—

"We talked of dreams, the subject having been introduced by a recitation by Coleridge of some lines he had written many years ago upon the building of a Dream-palace by Kubla-Khan: he had founded it on a passage he had met with in an old book of travels. Lamb maintained that the most impressive dream he had ever read was Clarence's, in 'Richard III.,' which was not now allowed to form part of the acted play. There was another famous dream in Shakspere, that of Antigonus in 'The Winter's Tale,' and all illustrated the line in Spenser's 'Fairy Queen,' Book iv. c. 5:

"'The things which day most minds at night do most appear;'

the truth of which every body's experience proved, and therefore every body at once acknowledged. Coleridge observed that there was something quite as true, near the same place in the poem, which was not unlikely to be passed over without remark, though founded upon the strictest and justest (his own superlative) observation of nature. It was where Scudamour lies down to sleep in the cave of Care, and is constantly annoyed and roused by the graduated hammers of the old smith's men. He called for a copy of the F. Q., and, when it was brought, turned to the end of the Canto, where it is said that Scudamour at last, weary with his journey and his anxieties, fell asleep: Coleridge then read, with his peculiar intonation and swing of voice, the following stanza:—

"'With that the wicked carle, the master smith,
A paire of red-hot iron tongs did take
Out of the burning cinders, and therewith
Under his side him nipp'd; that, forc'd to wake,

He felt his hart for very paine to quake,
And started up avenged for to be
On him, the which his quiet slomber brake:
Yet looking round about him none could see;
Yet did the smart remain, though he himself did flee.'

"Having read this, Coleridge paused for a moment or two, and looked round with an inquiring eye, as much as to say, 'Are you aware of what I refer to in this stanza?' Nobody saying a word, he went on: 'I mean this—that at night, and in sleep, cares are not only doubly burdensome, but some matters, that then seem to us sources of great anxiety, are not so in fact; and when we are thoroughly awake, and in possession of all our faculties, they really seem nothing, and we wonder at the influence they have had over us. So Scudamour, while under the power and delusion of sleep, seemed absolutely nipped to the soul by the red-hot pincers of Care, but opening his eyes and rousing himself, he found that he could see nothing that had inflicted the grievous pain upon him: there was no adequate cause for the increased mental suffering Scudamour had undergone.'

"The correctness of this piece of criticism was doubted, because in the last line it is said,

'Yet did the smart remain, though he himself did flee.'

"Coleridge (who did not always answer objectors, but usually went forward with his own speculations) urged that although some smart might remain, it had not the same intensity: that Scudamour had entered the cave in a state of mental suffering, and that what Spenser meant was, that sleep much enhanced and exaggerated that suffering; yet when Scudamour awoke, the cause of the increase was nowhere to be found. The original source of sorrow was not removed, but the red-hot pincers were removed, and there seemed no good reason for thinking worse of matters, than at the time the knight had fallen asleep. Coleridge enlarged for some time upon the reasons why distressing circumstances always seem doubly afflicting at night, when the body is in a horizontal position: he contended that the effort originated in the brain, to which the blood circulated with greater force and rapidity than when the body was perpendicular.

"The name of Samuel Rogers having been mentioned, a question arose how far he was entitled to the rank of a poet, and to what

rank as a poet? My father produced a copy of 'The Pleasures of Memory.'

"Coleridge dwelt upon the harmony and sweetness of many of the couplets, and was willing to put the versification about on a par with Goldsmith's 'Traveller.'"

§ 3. *Coleridge on his own mode of Lecturing.*

Here end our excerpts from Mr. Collier's Preface. We subjoin two interesting passages from a letter of Coleridge, written in the year 1819, in which he discusses himself as a lecturer:—

"I would not lecture on any subject for which I had to *acquire* the main knowledge, even though a month's or three months' previous time were allowed me; on no subject that had not employed my thoughts for a large portion of my life since earliest manhood, free of all outward and particular purpose."

"During a course of lectures, I faithfully employ all the intervening days in collecting and digesting the materials, whether I have or have not lectured on the same subject before, making no difference. The day of the lecture, till the hour of commencement, I devote to the consideration, what of the mass before me is best fitted to answer the purposes of a lecture, that is, to keep the audience awake and interested during the delivery, and to leave a sting behind, that is, a disposition to study the subject anew, under the light of a new principle. Several times, however, partly from apprehension respecting my health and animal spirits, partly from the wish to possess copies that might afterwards be marketable among the publishers, I have previously written the lecture: but before I had proceeded twenty minutes, I have been obliged to push the MS. away, and give the subject a new turn. Nay, this was so notorious, that many of my auditors used to threaten me, when they saw any number of written papers on my desk, to steal them away; declaring they never felt so secure of a good lecture as when they perceived that I had not a single scrap of writing before me.[1] I take far, far more pains

[1] "Rêvant de grands ouvrages de poésie et de philosophie, laissant échapper parfois de magnifiques aperçus littéraires, causant surtout de métaphysique allemande, il émerveillait les auditeurs de ses éblouis-

than would go to the set composition of a lecture, both by varied reading and by meditation; but for the words, illustrations, &c., I know almost as little as any one of the audience (that is, those of anything like the same education with myself) what they will be five minutes before the lecture begins. Such is my way; for such is my nature; and in attempting any other, I should only torment myself in order to disappoint my auditors—torment myself during the delivery, I mean, for in all other respects it would be a much shorter and easier task to deliver them from writing."

These extracts are taken from a letter to "J. Britton, Esq.," on his request that Coleridge would deliver a course of lectures at the Russell Institution. Coleridge's object is to remove the impression that he kept certain written lectures by him, which could be delivered anywhere at a moment's notice.

Mr. Gillman, in his "Life of Coleridge," speaking of the course of lectures delivered in 1818, observes:—"He lectured from notes, which he had carefully made; yet it was obvious that his audience was more delighted when, putting his notes aside, he spoke extempore."[1]

§ 4.—*Extracts from H. Crabb Robinson's Diary.*

We append Mr. H. C. Robinson's notes of the course, so far as they appear in his Diary, as published. Others, no doubt, his editor omitted, for the diarist tells us he missed none of the lectures. The extracts from the manuscript Diary which are printed, though numerous, we know to be merely a selection.

sants monologues; esprit prodigieux, plus étonnant par les espérances qu'il a données que par ses œuvres, il a, malgré ses faiblesses, exercé une réelle influence sur son temps."—VAPEREAU'S *Dictionnaire Universel des Littératures.*

[1] See Coleridge's observations to the same effect, in the extract from Mr. Collier's diary, under date Oct. 29, and in the Sixth Lecture.

"H. C. R. to Mrs. Clarkson.

"56, *Hatton Garden*,

"*Nov.* 29*th*, 1811.

"My dear Friend,

"Of course you have already heard of the lectures on poetry which Coleridge is now delivering, and I fear have begun to think me inattentive in not sending you some account of them. Yesterday he delivered the fourth, and I could not before form anything like an opinion of the probable result. Indeed, it is hardly otherwise now with me, but were I to wait till I could form a judgment, the very subject itself might escape from observation. He has about 150 hearers on an average. The lectures have been brilliant, that is, in passages; but I doubt much his capacity to render them popular. Or rather, I should say, I doubt any man's power to render a system of philosophy popular, which supposes so much unusual attention and rare faculties of thinking even in the hearer. The majority of what are called sensible and thinking men have, to borrow a phrase from Coleridge, "the passion of clear ideas;" and as all poets have a very opposite passion—that of warm feelings and delight in musing over conceptions and imaginings beyond the reach of the analytic faculty—no wonder there is a sort of natural hostility between these classes of minds. This will ever be a bar to Coleridge's extensive popularity. Besides which, he has certain unfortunate habits, which he will not (perhaps *cannot*) correct, very detrimental to his interests—I mean the vices of apologizing, anticipating, and repeating. We have had four lectures, and are still in the Prolegomena to the Shaksperian drama. When we are to begin Milton, I have no idea. With all these defects, there will always be a small circle who will listen with delight to his eloquent effusions (for that is the appropriate expression). I have not missed a lecture,[1] and have each time left the room with the satisfaction which the hearkening to the display of truth in a beautiful form always gives. I have a German friend who attends also, and who is delighted to find the logic and the rhetoric of his country delivered in a foreign language. There is no doubt that Coleridge's mind is much more German than English. My

[1] The first note to be found in the Diary, as printed,—that of Dec. 5,—is on the Sixth Lecture.

friend has pointed out striking analogies between Coleridge and German authors whom Coleridge has never seen. . . . ."

"*December 5th.*—Accompanied Mrs. Rutt to Coleridge's lecture. In this he surpassed himself in the art of talking in a very interesting way, without speaking at all on the subject announced. According to advertisement, he was to lecture on 'Romeo and Juliet,' and Shakspere's female characters. Instead of this he began with a defence of school-flogging, in preference at least to Lancaster's mode of punishing, without pretending to find the least connection between that topic and poetry. Afterwards he remarked on the character of the age of Elizabeth and James I., as compared with that of Charles I.; distinguished not very clearly between wit and fancy; referred to the different languages of Europe; attacked the fashionable notion concerning poetic diction; ridiculed the tautology of Johnson's line, 'If observation, with extensive view,' &c.; and warmly defended Shakspere against the charge of impurity. While Coleridge was commenting on Lancaster's mode of punishing boys, Lamb whispered: 'It is a pity he did not leave this till he got to "Henry VI.," for then he might say he could not help taking part against the Lancastrians.' Afterwards, when Coleridge was running from topic to topic, Lamb said, 'This is not much amiss. He promised a lecture on the Nurse in "Romeo and Juliet," and in its place he has given us one in the *manner* of the Nurse.'"

"Mrs. Clarkson to H. C. R.

"*Dec. 5th*, 1811.

"Do give me some account of Coleridge. I guess you drew up the account in the 'Times' of the first lecture. I do hope he will have steadiness to go on with the lectures to the end. It would be so great a point gained, if he could but pursue one object without interruption. . . . . I remember a beautiful expression of Patty Smith's, after describing a visit at Mr. Wilberforce's: 'To know him,' she said, 'all he is, and to see him with such lively childish spirits, one need not say, "God bless him!"—he seems already in the fulness of every earthly gift.' . . . . Of all men, there seems most need to say 'God bless poor Coleridge!' One could almost believe that an enchanter's spell was upon him,

forcing him to be what he is, and yet leaving him the power of showing what he might be."

"*December 9th.*—Accompanied Mrs. Rough to Coleridge's seventh and incomparably best lecture. He declaimed with great eloquence about love, without wandering from his subject, 'Romeo and Juliet.' He was spirited, methodical, and, for the greater part, intelligible, though profound. Drew up for the 'Morning Chronicle' a hasty report, which was inserted."

"*December 12th.*—Tea with Mrs. Flaxman, who accompanied me to Coleridge's lecture. He unhappily relapsed into his desultory habit, and delivered, I think, his worst lecture. He began with identifying religion with love, delivered a rhapsody on brotherly and sisterly love, which seduced him into a dissertation on incest. I at last lost all power of attending to him."

"H. C. R. TO MRS. CLARKSON.

"*56, Hatton Garden,*

"*Dec. 13th,* 1811.

"My dear Friend,

". . . . Yesterday I should have been able to send you a far more pleasant letter than I can possibly furnish you with now; for I should then have had to speak of one of the most gratifying and delightful exertions of Coleridge's mind on Monday last; and now I am both pained and provoked by as unworthy a sequel to his preceding lecture. And you know it is a law of our nature,

"'As high as we have mounted in delight,
In our dejection do we sink as low.'

"You have so beautifully and exactly expressed the sentiment that every considerate and kind observer of your friend must entertain, that it is quite needless to give you any account of his lectures with a view to direct any judgment you might wish to form, or any feeling you might be disposed to encourage. You will, I am sure, anticipate the way in which he will execute his lectures. As evidences of splendid talent, original thought, and rare powers of expression and fancy, they are all his *admirers* can wish; but as a discharge of his undertaking, a fulfilment of his promise to the public, they give his *friends* great uneasiness. As you express it, "an enchanter's spell seems to be upon him."

which takes from him the power of treating upon the only subject his hearers are anxious he should consider, while it leaves him infinite ability to riot and run wild on a variety of moral and religious themes. In his sixth lecture he was, by advertisement, to speak of 'Romeo and Juliet' and Shakspere's females; unhappily, some demon whispered the name of Lancaster in his ear: and we had, in one evening, an attack on the poor Quaker, a defence of boarding-school flogging, a parallel between the ages of Elizabeth and Charles, a defence of what is untruly called unpoetic language, an account of the different languages of Europe, and a vindication of Shakspere against the imputation of grossness!!! I suspect he did discover that offence was taken at this, for his succeeding lecture on Monday was all we could wish. He confined himself to 'Romeo and Juliet,' for a time, treated of the inferior characters, and delivered a most eloquent discourse on love, with a promise to point out how Shakspere had shown the same truths in the persons of the lovers. Yesterday we were to have a continuation of the theme. Alas! Coleridge began with a parallel between religion and love, which, though one of his favourite themes, he did not manage successfully. Romeo and Juliet were forgotten. And in the next lecture we are really to hear something of these lovers. Now this will be the fourth time that his hearers have been invited expressly to hear of this play. There are to be only fifteen lectures altogether (half have been delivered), and the course is to include Shakspere and Milton, the modern poets, &c.!!! Instead of a lecture on a definite subject, we have an immethodical rhapsody, very delightful to you and me, and only offensive from the certainty that it may and ought to offend those who come with other expectations. Yet, with all this, I cannot but be charmed with these *splendida vitia*, and my chief displeasure is occasioned by my being forced to hear the strictures of persons infinitely below Coleridge, without any power of refuting or contradicting them. Yet it is lucky he has hitherto omitted no lecture. Living with the Morgans, they force him to come with them to the lecture-room, and this is a great point gained."

"*December 16th.*—Took Miss Flaxman to Coleridge's lecture. Very desultory again at first, but when about half way through, he bethought himself of Shakspere; and though he forgot at last

what we had been four times in succession to hear, viz. of Romeo and Juliet as lovers, yet he treated beautifully of the 'Tempest,' and especially Prospero, Miranda, Ariel, and Caliban. This part most excellent."

"*December 30th.*—Attended Coleridge's lecture, in which he kept to his subject. He intimated to me his intention to deliver two lectures on Milton. As he had written to me about his dilemma, having so much to do in so little time, I gently hinted in my reply at his frequent digressions—those *splendida peccata* which his friends best apologized for by laying the emphasis on the adjective."

"H. C. R. to Mrs. Clarkson.

"56, *Hatton Garden.*

"*3rd January*, 1812.

"My dear Friend,

"I received your letter last night, and will write the answer immediately, though I cannot forward it till I have seen your brother for your address. I have a better, much better, account to give of Coleridge's lectures than formerly. His last three lectures have, for the greater part, been all that his friends could wish—his admirers expect. Your sister heard the two last, and from her you will learn much more than I could put into a letter, had I all the leisure I now want, or the memory I never had. His disquisitions on the characters of Richard III., Iago, Falstaff, were full of paradox, but very ingenious, and in the main true. His remarks on Richard II. and Hamlet very excellent. Last night he concluded his fine development of the Prince of Denmark by an eloquent statement of the moral of the play. 'Action,' he said, 'is the great end of all; no intellect, however grand, is valuable, if it draw us from action and lead us to think and think till the time of action is passed by, and we can do nothing.' Somebody said to me, 'This is a satire on himself.'—'No,' said I, 'it is an elegy.' A great many of his remarks on Hamlet were capable of a like application. I should add that he means to deliver several lectures beyond the promised number."

"*January 9th.*—Evening at Coleridge's lecture on Johnson's 'Preface.' Though sometimes obscure, his many palpable hits must have given general satisfaction."

"*January* 13*th*.—Accompanied Mrs. C. Aikin to Coleridge's lecture. A continuation of remarks on Johnson's 'Preface,' but feeble and unmeaning compared with the last. The latter part of the lecture very excellent. It was on 'Lear,' in which he vindicated the melancholy catastrophe, and on 'Othello,' in which he expressed the opinion that Othello is not a jealous character."[1]

"*January* 16*th*.—At Coleridge's lecture. He reviewed Johnson's 'Preface,' and vindicated warmly Milton's moral and political character, but I think with less than his usual ability. He excited a hiss once by calling Johnson a *fellow*, for which he happily apologized by observing that it is in the nature of evil to beget evil, and that we are thus apt to fall into the fault we censure. He remarked on Milton's minor poems, and the nature of blank verse. The latter half of the lecture was very good."

"*January* 20*th*.—In the evening at Coleridge's lecture. Conclusion of Milton. Not one of the happiest of Coleridge's efforts. Rogers was there, and with him was Lord Byron. He was wrapped up, but I recognized his club foot, and, indeed, his countenance and general appearance."

"H. C. R. to Mrs. Clarkson.

"*Gray's Inn*, 28*th January*, 1812.

"You will be interested to hear how Coleridge's lectures closed: they ended with *éclat*. The room was crowded, and the lecture had several passages more than brilliant—they were luminous, and the light gave conscious pleasure to every person who knew that he could both see the glory and the objects around it at once, while (you know) mere splendour, like the patent lamps, presents a flame that only puts out the eyes. Coleridge's explanation of the character of Satan, and his vindication of Milton against the charge of falling below his subject, where he introduces the Supreme Being, and his illustration of the difference between poetic and abstract truth, and of the *diversity in identity* between the philosopher and the poet, were equally wise and beautiful. He concluded with a few strokes of satire; but I cannot forgive him for selecting *alone* (excepting an attack on Pope's 'Homer,' qualified by insincere eulogy) Mrs. Barbauld. She is a living writer, a woman, and a person who, however dis-

[1] See "Othello," in Appendix, V., "Table Talk," June 24, 1827.

cordant with himself in character and taste, has still always shown him civilities and attentions. It was surely ungenerous."

"*February*[1] 27*th*.—Coleridge's concluding lecture."

There are only two or three other available notes in H. C. Robinson's Diary, on the subject of Coleridge. They may conveniently be inserted here.

"*December* 23*rd*, 1810.—Coleridge dined with the Colliers, talked a vast deal, and delighted every one. Politics, Kantian philosophy, and Shakspere successively—and at last a playful exposure of some bad poets. His remarks on Shakspere were singularly ingenious. Shakspere, he said, delighted in portraying characters in which the intellectual powers are found in a pre-eminent degree, while the moral faculties are wanting, at the same time that he taught the superiority of moral greatness. Such is the contrast exhibited in Iago and Othello. Iago's most marked feature is his delight in governing by fraud and superior understanding the noble-minded and generous Moor. In Richard III. cruelty is less the prominent trait than pride, to which a sense of personal deformity gave a deadly venom. Coleridge, however, asserted his belief that Shakspere wrote hardly anything of this play except the character of Richard: he found the piece a stock play and re-wrote the parts which developed the hero's character: he certainly did not write the scenes in which Lady Anne yielded to the usurper's solicitations. He considered 'Pericles' as illustrating the way in which Shakspere handled a piece he had to refit for representation. At first he proceeded with indifference, only now and then troubling himself to put in a thought or an image, but as he advanced he interested himself in his employment, and the last two acts are almost entirely by him.

"Hamlet he considered in a point of view which seems to agree very well with the representation given in 'Wilhelm Meister.' Hamlet is a man whose ideal and internal images are so vivid that all real objects are faint and dead to him. This we see in his soliloquies on the nature of man and his disregard of life: hence also his vacillation, and the purely convulsive energies he dis-

[1] This note is misplaced, and *February* a misprint for *January*.

played. He acts only by fits and snatches. He manifests a strong inclination to suicide. On my observing that it appeared strange Shakspere did not make suicide the termination to his piece, Coleridge replied that Shakspere wished to show how even such a character is at last obliged to be the sport of chance—a salutary moral doctrine. But I thought this the suggestion of the moment only, and not a happy one, to obviate a seeming objection. Hamlet remains at last the helpless, unpractical being, though every inducement to activity is given which the very appearance of the spirit of his murdered father could bring with it.

"Coleridge also considered Falstaff as an instance of the predominance of intellectual power. He is content to be thought both a liar and a coward, in order to obtain influence over the minds of his associates. His aggravated lies about the robbery are conscious and purposed, not inadvertent untruths. On my observing that this account seemed to justify Cooke's representation, according to which a foreigner imperfectly understanding the character would fancy Falstaff the designing knave who does actually outwit the Prince, Coleridge answered that, in his *own* estimation, Falstaff is the superior, who cannot easily be convinced that the Prince has escaped him; but that, as in other instances, Shakspere has shown us the defeat of mere intellect by a noble feeling; the Prince being the superior moral character, who rises above his insidious companion.

"On my noticing Hume's obvious preference of the French tragedians to Shakspere, Coleridge exclaimed, 'Hume comprehended as much of Shakspere as an apothecary's phial would, placed under the falls of Niagara.'

"We spoke of Milton. He was, said Coleridge, a most determined aristocrat, an enemy to popular elections, and he would have been most decidedly hostile to the Jacobins of the present day. He would have thought our popular freedom excessive. He was of opinion that the government belonged to the wise, and he thought the people fools. In all his works there is but *one* exceptionable passage—that in which he vindicates the expulsion of the members from the House of Commons by Cromwell. Coleridge on this took occasion to express his approbation of the death of Charles.

"Of Milton's 'Paradise Regained,' he observed that however inferior its kind is to 'Paradise Lost,' its execution is superior. This was all Milton meant in the preference he is said to have

given to his later poem. It is a didactic poem, and formed on the model of Job."

"*January 29th*, 1811.—I walked with Coleridge to Rickman's, where we dined. He talked on Shakspere, particularly his Fools. These he regarded as supplying the place of the ancient chorus. The ancient drama, he observed, is distinguished from the Shaksperian in this, that it exhibits a sort of abstraction, not of character, but of idea. A certain sentiment or passion was exhibited in all its purity, unmixed with anything that could interfere with its effect. Shakspere, on the other hand, imitates life, mingled as we find it with joy and sorrow. We meet constantly in life with persons who are, as it were, unfeeling spectators of the most passionate situations. The Fool serves to supply the place of some such uninterested person, where all the other characters are interested. The most genuine and real of Shakspere's Fools is in 'Lear.' In 'Hamlet' the fool is, as it were, divided into several parts, dispersed through the play."

"*February 1st*, 1836.—In Coleridge there was a sort of dreaminess,[1] which would not let him see things as they were. He would talk about his own feelings, and recollections, and intentions, in a way that deceived others, but he was first deceived himself. 'I am sure,' said Wordsworth, 'that he never formed a plan of *Christabel*, or knew what was to be its end. And that he merely deceived himself when he thought, as he says, that he had the idea quite clearly in his mind.'"

"*May 24th*, 1843.—Looked over some letters of Coleridge to Mrs. Clarkson. I make an extract from one of a part only of a parenthesis, as characteristic of his involved style:—'Each, I say (for, in writing letters, I envy dear Southey's power of saying one thing at a time, in short and close sentences, whereas my thoughts bustle along like a Surinam toad, with little toads sprouting out of back, side, and belly, vegetating while it crawls); each, I say—'"

§ 5.—*Lectures before* 1811-12.

In a letter of February, 1818, to one who attended his

[1] "His eyes were large and soft in their expression, and it was by the peculiar appearance of haze or dreaminess which mixed with their light that I recognized their object."—De Quincey. That is, the owner of the eyes, whom he had not seen before, De Quincey concluded, must be Coleridge.

course of that year, Coleridge says: "Sixteen or rather seventeen years ago, I delivered eighteen lectures on Shakspere at the Royal Institution." We frequently find him alluding elsewhere to these "eighteen lectures on Shakspere," generally in connection with the charge against him of borrowing from Schlegel.

No trace of any course so early in the century can be discovered.

In 1801 Coleridge settled at Keswick. During the years immediately succeeding, his health much distressed him. He insured his life. He developed a dangerous habit of opium-taking, to relieve rheumatic pains. At last, in 1804, he fled from Keswick to Malta. Yet the course, if there was one, must have been delivered during this period.

It has been plausibly suggested that "16 or rather 17", —written, as we print it, with figures,—is misprinted or miscopied for "10 or rather 11."

Coleridge gave a course of lectures at the Royal Institution in 1806-7, "On the Principles of the Fine Arts." Shakspere would inevitably find his way into it. In 1807-8, he commenced there "Five courses, of five Lectures each, on Distinguished English Poets." From various reasons, this series of lectures was not completed; but the first five, advertised to be on Shakspere, were certainly delivered, and probably the rest that were delivered were on Shakspere, also.

Is it not a reasonable conjecture that it is to these two courses that Coleridge refers? He holds persistently to the "eighteen," and this is a more serious difficulty than the "sixteen or rather seventeen;" yet, is it not conceivable that, putting the two series together, he did deliver eighteen

lectures on Shakspere? There is a passage in Gillman's "Life," which gives countenance to such a conjecture. In it Coleridge speaks of "the substance of the Lectures given, and intended to have been given, at the Royal Institution, on the Distinguished English Poets, in illustration of the general principles of Poetry, together with suggestions concerning the affinity of the Fine Arts to each other, and the principles common to them all: Architecture; Gardening; Dress; Music; Painting; Poetry." The two series, in this passage, clearly run together in Coleridge's mind. Nor was it long after the lectures that he wrote it. It occurs in a Prospectus to the "Friend," dated 1809.

In a note to Chapter II. of the "Biographia Literaria," Coleridge speaks of these "eighteen lectures on Shakspere" as his "first course;" and they were delivered, he tells us,—in a statement prefixed to the notes on "Hamlet," in the second portion of our volume,—in "the same year in which Sir Humphry Davy, a fellow lecturer, made his great revolutionary discoveries in chemistry." Sir Humphry Davy was only four-and-twenty in 1802. "He made," says Mrs. H. N. Coleridge,[1] "his great discovery, the decomposition of the fixed alkalies and detection of their metallic bases, in October of 1807." He also seems to have been the means of inducing Coleridge to give lectures about this time.

The argument is strong. Mrs. H. N. Coleridge thinks it conclusive. We, also, are convinced; but the conclusion is not quite made out. For Davy was appointed Lecturer on Chemistry, Director of the Laboratory, &c., at the Royal Institution in 1801, and, after previous lectures, which gave great satisfaction, delivered one on January 21, 1802, "to

[1] In a note to her edition (Pickering, 1849) of the "Notes and Lectures on Shakspere," from her husband's "Remains of S. T. Coleridge."

a crowded and enlightened audience," which was afterwards printed by request, and produced an "extraordinary sensation," causing Sir Harry Englefield to speak of him as "covered with glory;"[1] and in the second portion of this volume, we find a classification of the plays of Shakspere, described as "attempted in 1802."

However, observe that, in the statement prefixed to the notes on "Hamlet," Coleridge, speaking of these eighteen lectures, says of Schlegel's, that they "were not given orally till two years after mine."

Now Schlegel's lectures were given orally in 1808. The point is proved.

In the note from the "Biographia Literaria," alluded to above, Coleridge supplies a piece of information, which—speaking, as he is, of our lectures of 1811-12,—is too consolatory to be omitted. He informs us that his "first course" "differed from the following courses only by varying the illustrations of the same thoughts."

Coleridge lectured on Poetry at the Royal Institution in 1810. See extract from Mr. Collier's Diary, under date, October 29th, 1811, and a statement in the sixth Lecture.

It is to a later period than 1811-12, that Dr. Dibdin alludes in his "Reminiscences," when he thus speaks of Coleridge: "I once came from Kensington in a snow-storm, to hear him lecture upon Shakspere. I might have sat as wisely and comfortably by my own fireside—for no Coleridge appeared.[2] And this I think occurred more than once at the Royal Institution."

[1] "Life of Sir Humphry Davy," by J. A. Paris, 1831.

[2] See the conclusion of H. C. Robinson's letter to Mrs. Clarkson, on p. 24.

LECTURES ON SHAKSPERE AND MILTON.

1811-12.

LECTURE I.

I CANNOT avoid the acknowledgment of the difficulty of the task I have undertaken; yet I have undertaken it voluntarily, and I shall discharge it to the best of my abilities, requesting those who hear me to allow for deficiencies, and to bear in mind the wide extent of my subject. The field is almost boundless as the sea, yet full of beauty and variety as the land: I feel in some sort oppressed by abundance; *inopem me copia fecit.*

What I most rely upon is your sympathy; and, as I proceed, I trust that I shall interest you: sympathy and interest are to a lecturer like the sun and the showers to nature—absolutely necessary to the production of blossoms and fruit.

May I venture to observe that my own life has been employed more in reading and conversation—in collecting and reflecting, than in printing and publishing; for I never felt the desire, so often experienced by others, of becoming an author. It was accident made me an author in the first instance: I was called a poet almost before I knew I could write poetry.[1] In what I have to offer I shall speak freely,

[1] Some remarks of Coleridge on himself as a poet may be given here from Mr. Collier's Diary, November 1st, 1811:—

whether of myself or of my contemporaries, when it is necessary; conscious superiority, if indeed it be superior, need not fear to have its self-love or its pride wounded; and contempt, the most absurd and debasing feeling that can actuate the human mind, must be far below the sphere in which lofty intellects live and move and have their being.

On the first examination of a work, especially a work of fiction and fancy, it is right to inquire to what feeling or passion it addresses itself—to the benevolent, or to the vindictive; whether it is calculated to excite emulation, or to produce envy, under the common mask of scorn; and, in the next place, whether the pleasure we receive from it has a tendency to keep us good, to make us better, or to reward us for being good.

It will be expected of me, as my prospectus indicates, that I should say something of the causes of false criticism

"For my part (said Coleridge,) I freely own that I have no title to the name of a poet, according to my own definition of poetry. (He did not state his definition.) Many years ago a small volume of verses came out with my name: it was not my doing, but Cottle offered me £20, when I much wanted it, for some short pieces I had written at Cambridge, and I sold the manuscripts to him, but I declare that I had no notion, at the time, that they were meant for publication; my poverty, and not my will, consented. Cottle paid my poverty, and I was dubbed poet, almost before I knew whether I was in Bristol or in London. I met people in the streets who congratulated me upon being a poet, and that was the first notice I had of my new rank and dignity. I was to have had £20 for what Cottle bought, but I never received more than £15, and for this paltry sum I was styled poet by the reviewers, who fell foul of me for what they termed my bombast and buckram. Nevertheless 500 copies were sold, and a new edition being called for, I pleaded guilty to the charge of inflation and grandiloquence. But now, only see the contrast! Wordsworth has printed two poems of mine, but without my name, and again the reviewers have laid their claws upon me, and for what? Not for bombast and buckram—not for inflation and grandiloquence, but for mock simplicity; and now I am put down as the master of a school for the instruction of grown children in nursery rhymes."

particularly as regards poetry, though I do not mean to confine myself to that only: in doing so, it will be necessary for me to point out some of the obstacles which impede, and possibly prevent, the formation of a correct judgment. These are either—

1. Accidental causes, arising out of the particular circumstances of the age in which we live; or—

2. Permanent causes, flowing out of the general principles of our nature.

Under the first head, accidental causes, may be classed—1. The events that have occurred in our own day, which, from their importance alone, have created a world of readers. 2. The practice of public speaking, which encourages a too great desire to be understood at once, and at the first blush. 3. The prevalence of reviews, magazines, newspapers, novels, &c.

Of the last, and of the perusal of them, I will run the risk of asserting, that where the reading of novels prevails as a habit, it occasions in time the entire destruction of the powers of the mind; it is such an utter loss to the reader, that it is not so much to be called pass-time as kill-time. It conveys no trustworthy information as to facts; it produces no improvement of the intellect, but fills the mind with a mawkish and morbid sensibility, which is directly hostile to the cultivation, invigoration, and enlargement of the nobler faculties of the understanding.

Reviews are generally pernicious, because the writers determine without reference to fixed principles—because reviews are usually filled with personalities; and, above all, because they teach people rather to judge than to consider, decide than to reflect: thus they encourage superficiality, and induce the thoughtless and the idle to adopt sentiments conveyed under the authoritative WE, and not, by the working and subsequent clearing of their own minds, to form just original opinions. In older times writers were

looked up to almost as intermediate beings, between angels and men; afterwards they were regarded as venerable and, perhaps, inspired teachers; subsequently they descended to the level of learned and instructive friends; but in modern days they are deemed culprits more than benefactors: as culprits they are brought to the bar of self-erected and self-satisfied tribunals. If a person be now seen reading a new book, the most usual question is—"What trash have you there?" I admit that there is some reason for this difference in the estimate; for in these times, if a man fail as a tailor, or a shoemaker, and can read and write correctly (for spelling is still of some consequence) he becomes an author.[1]

The crying sin of modern criticism is that it is overloaded with personality. If an author commit an error, there is no wish to set him right for the sake of truth, but for the sake of triumph—that the reviewer may show how much wiser, or how much abler he is than the writer. Reviewers are usually people who would have been poets, historians, biographers, &c., if they could: they have tried their talents at one or at the other, and have failed; therefore they turn critics, and, like the Roman emperor, a critic most hates those who excel in the particular department in which he, the critic, has notoriously been defeated. This is an age of personality and political gossip, when insects, as in ancient Egypt, are worshipped in proportion to the venom of their stings—when poems, and especially satires, are valued according to the number of living names they contain; and where the notes, however, have this comparative excellence, that they are generally more poetical and pointed than the text. This style of criticism is at the

[1] Here, Mr. Collier says, Coleridge made a quotation from Jeremy Taylor, and observed, that "although Jeremy Taylor wrote only in prose, according to some definitions of poetry he might be considered one of our noblest poets."

present moment one of the chief pillars of the Scotch professorial court; and, as to personality in poems, I remember to have once seen an epic advertised, and strongly recommended, because it contained more than a hundred names of living characters.

How derogatory, how degrading, this is to true poetry I need not say. A very wise writer has maintained that there is more difference between one man and another, than between man and a beast: I can conceive of no lower state of human existence than that of a being who, insensible to the beauties of poetry himself, endeavours to reduce others to his own level. What Hooker so eloquently claims for law I say of poetry—"Her seat is the bosom of God, her voice the harmony of the world; all things in heaven and on earth do her homage." It is the language of heaven, and in the exquisite delight we derive from poetry we have, as it were, a type, a foretaste, and a prophecy of the joys of heaven.

Another cause of false criticism is the greater purity of morality in the present age, compared even with the last. Our notions upon this subject are sometimes carried to excess, particularly among those who in print affect to enforce the value of a high standard. Far be it from me to depreciate that value; but let me ask, who now will venture to read a number of the "Spectator," or of the "Tatler," to his wife and daughters, without first examining it to make sure that it contains no word which might, in our day, offend the delicacy of female ears, and shock feminine susceptibility? Even our theatres, the representations at which usually reflect the morals of the period, have taken a sort of domestic turn, and while the performances at them may be said, in some sense, to improve the heart, there is no doubt that they vitiate the taste. The effect is bad, however good the cause.

Attempts have been made to compose and adapt systems of education; but it appears to me something like putting Greek and Latin grammars into the hands of boys, before they understand a word of Greek or Latin. These grammars contain instructions on all the minutiæ and refinements of language, but of what use are they to persons who do not comprehend the first rudiments? Why are you to furnish the means of judging, before you give the capacity to judge? These seem to me to be among the principal accidental causes of false criticism.

Among the permanent causes, I may notice—

First, the great pleasure we feel in being told of the knowledge we possess, rather than of the ignorance we suffer. Let it be our first duty to teach thinking, and then what to think about. You cannot expect a person to be able to go through the arduous process of thinking, who has never exercised his faculties. In the Alps we see the Chamois hunter ascend the most perilous precipices without danger, and leap from crag to crag over vast chasms without dread or difficulty, and who but a fool, if unpractised, would attempt to follow him? It is not intrepidity alone that is necessary, but he who would imitate the hunter must have gone through the same process for the acquisition of strength, skill, and knowledge: he must exert, and be capable of exerting, the same muscular energies, and display the same perseverance and courage, or all his efforts will be worse than fruitless: they will lead not only to disappointment, but to destruction. Systems have been invented with the avowed object of teaching people how to think; but in my opinion the proper title for such a work ought to be "The Art of teaching how to think without thinking." Nobody endeavours to instruct a man how to leap, until he has first given him vigour and elasticity.

Nothing is more essential—nothing can be more im-

portant, than in every possible way to cultivate and improve the thinking powers: the mind as much requires exercise as the body, and no man can fully and adequately discharge the duties of whatever station he is placed in without the power of thought. I do not, of course, say that a man may not get through life without much thinking, or much power of thought; but if he be a carpenter, without thought a carpenter he must remain: if he be a weaver, without thought a weaver he must remain.—On man God has not only bestowed gifts, but the power of giving: he is not a creature born but to live and die: he has had faculties communicated to him, which, if he do his duty, he is bound to communicate and make beneficial to others. Man, in a secondary sense, may be looked upon in part as his own creator, for by the improvement of the faculties bestowed upon him by God, he not only enlarges them, but may be said to bring new ones into existence. The Almighty has thus condescended to communicate to man, in a high state of moral cultivation, a portion of his own great attributes.

A second permanent cause of false criticism is connected with the habit of not taking the trouble to think: it is the custom which some people have established of judging of books by books.—Hence to such the use and value of reviews. Why has nature given limbs, if they are not to be applied to motion and action; why abilities, if they are to lie asleep, while we avail ourselves of the eyes, ears, and understandings of others? As men often employ servants, to spare them the nuisance of rising from their seats and walking across a room, so men employ reviews in order to save themselves the trouble of exercising their own power of judging: it is only mental slothfulness and sluggishness that induce so many to adopt, and take for granted the opinions of others.

I may illustrate this moral imbecility by a case which

came within my own knowledge. A friend of mine had seen it stated somewhere, or had heard it said, that Shakspere had not made Constance, in "King John," speak the language of nature, when she exclaims on the loss of Arthur,

> "Grief fills the room up of my absent child,
> Lies in his bed, walks up and down with me;
> Puts on his pretty looks, repeats his words,
> Remembers me of all his gracious parts,
> Stuffs out his vacant garments with his form:
> Then have I reason to be fond of grief."
>
> *King John*, Act. iii. Scene 4.

Within three months after he had repeated the opinion, (not thinking for himself) that these lines were out of nature, my friend died. I called upon his mother, an affectionate, but ignorant woman, who had scarcely heard the name of Shakspere, much less read any of his plays. Like Philip, I endeavoured to console her, and among other things I told her, in the anguish of her sorrow, that she seemed to be as fond of grief as she had been of her son. What was her reply? Almost a prose parody on the very language of Shakspere—the same thoughts in nearly the same words, but with a different arrangement. An attestation like this is worth a thousand criticisms.

As a third permanent cause of false criticism we may notice the vague use of terms. And here I may take the liberty of impressing upon my hearers the fitness, if not the necessity, of employing the most appropriate words and expressions, even in common conversation, and in the ordinary transactions of life. If you want a substantive do not take the first that comes into your head, but that which most distinctly and peculiarly conveys your meaning; if an adjective, remember the grammatical use of that part of speech, and be careful that it expresses some quality in the substantive that you wish to impress upon

your hearer. Reflect for a moment on the vague and uncertain manner in which the word "taste" has been often employed; and how such epithets as "sublime," "majestic," "grand," "striking," "picturesque," &c., have been misapplied, and how they have been used on the most unworthy and inappropriate occasions.

I was one day admiring one of the falls of the Clyde; and ruminating upon what descriptive term could be most fitly applied to it, I came to the conclusion that the epithet "majestic" was the most appropriate. While I was still contemplating the scene a gentleman and a lady came up, neither of whose faces bore much of the stamp of superior intelligence, and the first words the gentleman uttered were "It is very majestic." I was pleased to find such a confirmation of my opinion, and I complimented the spectator upon the choice of his epithet, saying that he had used the best word that could have been selected from our language: "Yes, sir," replied the gentleman, "I say it is very majestic: it is sublime, it is beautiful, it is grand, it is picturesque."—"Ay (added the lady), it is the prettiest thing I ever saw." I own that I was not a little disconcerted.

You will see, by the terms of my prospectus, that I intend my lectures to be, not only "in illustration of the principles of poetry," but to include a statement of the application of those principles, "as grounds of criticism on the most popular works of later English poets, those of the living included." If I had thought this task presumptuous on my part, I should not have voluntarily undertaken it; and in examining the merits, whether positive or comparative, of my contemporaries, I shall dismiss all feelings and associations which might lead me from the formation of a right estimate. I shall give talent and genius its due praise, and only bestow censure where, as it seems to me, truth and justice demand it. I shall, of

course, carefully avoid falling into that system of false criticism which I condemn in others; and, above all, whether I speak of those whom I know, or of those whom I do not know, of friends or of enemies, of the dead or of the living, my great aim will be to be strictly impartial. No man can truly apply principles, who displays the slightest bias in the application of them; and I shall have much greater pleasure in pointing out the good, than in exposing the bad. I fear no accusation of arrogance from the amiable and the wise: I shall pity the weak, and despise the malevolent.

Report of the First Lecture.

It is instructive to compare with Mr. Collier's version a report of this first Lecture, which appeared in "The Times." It was inserted the morning after delivery (November 19, 1811), and is stated to be "From a Correspondent." It appears to have been written by H. C. Robinson. See Diary, quoted, page 22, above. A brief report may also be found in "Notes and Queries," August 4th, 1855, from the "Dublin Correspondent." "The Times" report is as follows:—

"Mr. Coleridge commenced yesterday evening his long announced lectures on the principles of poetry. To those who consider poetry in no other light than as a most *entertaining* species of composition, this gentleman's mode of inquiring into its principles may want attraction. Unlike most professional critics on works of taste, his great object appears to be to exhibit in poetry the principles of moral wisdom, and the laws of our intellectual nature, which form the basis of social existence. In the introductory lecture delivered last night Mr. C. deduced the causes of false criticism on works of imagination, from circumstances which may hitherto have been thought to stand in no very close connection with our literary habits, viz., the

excessive stimulus produced by the wonderful political events of the age;—the facilities afforded to general and indiscriminate reading;—the rage for public speaking, and the habit consequently induced of requiring instantaneous intelligibility;—periodical criticism, which teaches those to fancy they can judge who ought to be content to learn;—the increase of cities, which has put an end to the old-fashioned village-gossiping, and substituted literary small talk in its place; and the improved habits of domestic life, and higher purity of moral feelings, which in relation to the drama have produced effects unfavourable to the exertion of poetic talent or of judgment. From such topics it will be seen that Mr. Coleridge is original in his views. On all occasions, indeed, he shows himself to be a man who really thinks and feels for himself; and in the development of his moral philosophy, something may be expected from him very different from critics in general on Shakspere, Milton, and our other national poets. However serious the design of Mr. C.'s lectures, in the execution he shows himself by no means destitute of talents of humour, irony, and satire."

LECTURE II.[1]

READERS may be divided into four classes:

1. Sponges, who absorb all they read, and return it nearly in the same state, only a little dirtied.

2. Sand-glasses, who retain nothing, and are content to get through a book for the sake of getting through the time.

3. Strain-bags, who retain merely the dregs of what they read.

4. Mogul diamonds, equally rare and valuable, who profit by what they read, and enable others to profit by it also.[2]

I adverted in my last lecture to the prevailing laxity in the use of terms: this is the principal complaint to which the moderns are exposed; but it is a grievous one, inasmuch as it inevitably tends to the misapplication of words, and to the corruption of language. I mentioned the word "taste," but the remark applies not merely to substantives

[1] Compare this lecture with Coleridge's note on "The Drama generally, and Public Taste." Lectures and Notes of 1818. Section I.

[2] The following passage is extracted from the Mishna (*Cap. Patrum*, v. 8, 15):

"Quadruplices conditiones (inveniunt) in his qui sedent coram sapientibus (audiendi causâ) videlicet conditio spongiæ, clepsydræ, sacci fecinacei, et cribri. Spongia sugendo attrahit omnia. Clepsydra, quod ex una parte attrahit, ex altera rursum effundit. Saccus fecinaceus effundit vinum, et colligit feces. Cribrum emittit farinam, et colligit similam."

and adjectives, to things and their epithets, but to verbs: thus, how frequently is the verb "indorsed" strained from its true signification, as given by Milton in the expression—"And elephants indorsed with towers." Again, "virtue" has been equally perverted: originally it signified merely strength; it then became strength of mind and valour, and it has now been changed to the class term for moral excellence in all its various species. I only introduce these as instances by the way, and nothing could be easier than to multiply them.

At the same time, while I recommend precision both of thought and expression, I am far from advocating a pedantic niceness in the choice of language: such a course would only render conversation stiff and stilted. Dr. Johnson used to say that in the most unrestrained discourse he always sought for the properest word,—that which best and most exactly conveyed his meaning: to a certain point he was right, but because he carried it too far, he was o[illegible] laborious where he ought to have been light, and fo[illegible] where he ought to have been familiar. Men [illegible] endeavour to distinguish subtly, that they m[illegible] afterwards to assimilate truly.

I have often heard the que[illegible]
great [illegible]
[illegible]
[illegible]
[illegible]
inq[illegible]
"poe[illegible]
Gulliv[illegible]
arrive[illegible]
absolu[illegible]
words [illegible]
poetry [illegible]
these [illegible]

morals, politics, and philosophy no useful discussion can be entered upon, unless we begin by explaining and understanding the terms we employ. It is therefore requisite that I should state to you what I mean by the word "poetry," before I commence any consideration of the comparative merits of those who are popularly called "poets."

Words are used in two ways —

1. In a sense that comprises everything called by that name. For instance, the words "poetry" and "sense" are employed in this manner, when we say that such a line is bad poetry or bad sense, when in truth it is neither poetry nor sense. If it be bad poetry, it is not poetry; if it be bad sense, it is not sense. The same of "metre:" bad metre is not metre.

2. In a philosophic sense, which must include a definition of what is essential to the thing. Nobody means mere metre by poetry; so, mere rhyme is not poetry. Some-[illegible]g more is required, and what is that something? It is [illegible]wit, because we may have wit where we never dream [illegible] Is it the just observation of human life? Is it [illegible] and a felicitous selection of words? This, in-[illegible]come nearer to the taste of the present age, [illegible] I am [illegible]o think [illegible]r [illegible]vn [illegible]ted [illegible]nd in [illegible]guage [illegible]which a [illegible]loyed.[1] [illegible]o give [illegible]ar poem

It is an art (or whatever better term our language may afford) of representing, in words, external nature and human thoughts and affections, both relatively to human affections, by the production of as much immediate pleasure in parts, as is compatible with the largest sum of pleasure in the whole.

Or, to vary the words, in order to make the abstract idea more intelligible :—

It is the art of communicating whatever we wish to communicate, so as both to express and produce excitement, but for the purpose of immediate pleasure; and each part is fitted to afford as much pleasure, as is compatible with the largest sum in the whole.

You will naturally ask my reasons for this definition of poetry, and they are these :—

"It is a representation of nature;" but that is not enough: the anatomist and the topographer give representations of nature: therefore I add:

"And of the human thoughts and affections." Here the metaphysician interferes: here our best novelists interfere likewise,—excepting that the latter describe with more minuteness, accuracy, and truth, than is consistent with poetry. Consequently I subjoin:

"It must be relative to the human affections." Here my chief point of difference is with the novel-writer, the historian, and all those who describe not only nature, and the human affections, but relatively to the human affections: therefore I must add:

"And it must be done for the purpose of immediate pleasure." In poetry the general good is to be accomplished through the pleasure, and if the poet do not do that, he ceases to be a poet to him to whom he gives it not. Still, it is not enough, because we may point out many prose writers to whom the whole of the definition hitherto furnished would apply. I add, therefore, that

it is not only for the purpose of immediate pleasure, but—

"The work must be so constructed as to produce in each part that highest quantity of pleasure, or a high quantity of pleasure." There metre introduces its claim, where the feeling calls for it. Our language gives to expression a certain measure, and will, in a strong state of passion, admit of scansion from the very mouth. The very assumption that we are reading the work of a poet supposes that he is in a continuous state of excitement; and thereby arises a language in prose unnatural, but in poetry natural.

There is one error which ought to be peculiarly guarded against, which young poets are apt to fall into, and which old poets commit, from being no poets, but desirous of the end which true poets seek to attain. No: I revoke the words; they are not desirous of that of which their little minds can have no just conception. They have no desire of fame—that glorious immortality of true greatness—

> "That lives and spreads aloft by those pure eyes,
> And perfect witness of all judging Jove;"
>
> MILTON'S *Lycidas*.

but they struggle for reputation, that echo of an echo, in whose very etymon its signification is contained. Into this error the author of "The Botanic Garden" has fallen, through the whole of which work, I will venture to assert, there are not twenty images described as a man would describe them in a state of excitement. The poem is written with all the tawdry industry of a milliner anxious to dress up a doll in silks and satins. Dr. Darwin laboured to make his style fine and gaudy, by accumulating and applying all the sonorous and handsome-looking words in our language. This is not poetry, and I subjoin to my definition—

That a true poem must give "as much pleasure in each

part as is compatible with the greatest sum of pleasure in the whole." We must not look to parts merely, but to the whole, and to the effect of that whole. In reading Milton, for instance, scarcely a line can be pointed out which, critically examined, could be called in itself good: the poet would not have attempted to produce merely what is in general understood by a good line; he sought to produce glorious paragraphs and systems of harmony, or, as he himself expresses it,

> "Many a winding bout
> Of linked sweetness long drawn out."
> *L'Allegro.*

Such, therefore, as I have now defined it, I shall consider the sense of the word "Poetry:" pleasurable excitement is its origin and object; pleasure is the magic circle out of which the poet must not dare to tread. Part of my definition, you will be aware, would apply equally to the arts of painting and music, as to poetry: but to the last are added words and metre, so that my definition is strictly and logically applicable to poetry, and to poetry only, which produces delight, the parent of so many virtues. When I was in Italy, a friend of mine, who pursued painting almost with the enthusiasm of madness, believing it superior to every other art, heard the definition I have given, acknowledged its correctness, and admitted the pre-eminence of poetry.

I never shall forget, when in Rome, the acute sensation of pain I experienced on beholding the frescoes of Raphael and Michael Angelo, and on reflecting that they were indebted for their preservation solely to the durable material upon which they were painted. There they are, the permanent monuments (permanent as long as walls and plaster last) of genius and skill, while many others of their mighty works have become the spoils of insatiate avarice, or the victims of wanton barbarism. How grateful ought man-

kind to be, that so many of the great literary productions of antiquity have come down to us—that the works of Homer, Euclid, and Plato, have been preserved—while we possess those of Bacon, Newton, Milton, Shakspere, and of so many other living-dead men of our own island. These, fortunately, may be considered indestructible: they shall remain to us till the end of time itself—till time, in the words of a great poet of the age of Shakspere, has thrown his last dart at death, and shall himself submit to the final and inevitable destruction of all created matter.[1]

A second irruption of the Goths and Vandals could not now endanger their existence, secured as they are by the wonders of modern invention, and by the affectionate admiration of myriads of human beings. It is as nearly two centuries as possible since Shakspere ceased to write, but when shall he cease to be read? When shall he cease to give light and delight? Yet even at this moment he is only receiving the first-fruits of that glory, which must continue to augment as long as our language is spoken. English has given immortality to him, and he has given immortality to English. Shakspere can never die, and the language in which he wrote must with him live for ever.

Yet, in spite of all this, some prejudices have attached themselves to the name of our illustrious countryman, which it will be necessary for me first to endeavour to overcome. On the continent, we may remark, the works of

[1] He alludes to Ben Jonson's epitaph on the Countess of Pembroke:

"Underneath this sable herse
Lies the subject of all verse,
Sidney's sister, Pembroke's mother.
Death! ere thou hast slain another,
Learn'd, and fair, and good as she,
Time shall throw a dart at thee."

Shakspere are honoured in a double way—by the admiration of the Germans, and by the contempt of the French.

Among other points of objection taken by the French, perhaps, the most noticeable is, that he has not observed the sacred unities, so hallowed by the practice of their own extolled tragedians. They hold, of course, after Corneille and Racine, that Sophocles is the most perfect model for tragedy, and Aristotle its most infallible censor; and that as Hamlet, Lear, Macbeth, and other dramas by Shakspere, are not framed upon that model, and consequently not subject to the same laws, they maintain (not having impartiality enough to question the model, or to deny the rules of the Stagirite) that Shakspere was a sort of irregular genius—that he is now and then tasteful and touching, but generally incorrect; and, in short, that he was a mere child of nature, who did not know any better than to write as he has written.

It is an old, and I have hitherto esteemed it a just, Latin maxim, *Oportet discentem credere, edoctum judicare*; but modern practice has inverted it, and it ought now rather to stand, *Oportet discentem judicare, edoctum credere*. To remedy this mistake there is but one course, namely, the acquirement of knowledge. I have often run the risk of applying to the ignorant, who assumed the post and province of judges, a ludicrous, but not inapt simile: they remind me of a congregation of frogs, involved in darkness in a ditch, who keep an eternal croaking, until a lantern is brought near the scene of their disputation, when they instantly cease their discordant harangues. They may be more politely resembled to night-flies, which flutter round the glimmering of a feeble taper, but are overpowered by the dazzling splendour of noon-day. Nor can it be otherwise, until the prevalent notion is exploded, that knowledge is easily taught, and until the conviction is general, that the hardest thing learned is that people are ignorant. All

are apt enough to discover and expose the ignorance of their friends, but their blind faith in their own sufficiency is something more than marvellous.

Some persons have contended that mathematics ought to be taught by making the illustrations obvious to the senses. Nothing can be more absurd or injurious: it ought to be our never-ceasing effort to make people think, not feel; and it is very much owing to this mistake that, to those who do not think, and have not been made to think, Shakspere has been found so difficult of comprehension. The condition of the stage, and the character of the times in which our great poet flourished, must first of all be taken into account, in considering the question as to his judgment. If it were possible to say which of his great powers and qualifications is more admirable than the rest, it unquestionably appears to me that his judgment is the most wonderful; and at this conviction I have arrived after a careful comparison of his productions with those of his best and greatest contemporaries.[1]

1 "Pope was under the common error of his age, an error, far from being sufficiently exploded even at the present day. It consists (as I explained at large, and proved in detail, in my public lectures) in mistaking for the essentials of the Greek stage certain rules, which the wise poets imposed upon themselves, in order to render all the remaining parts of the drama consistent with those that had been forced upon them by circumstances independent of their will; out of which circumstances the drama itself arose. The circumstances in the time of Shakspere, which it was equally out of his power to alter, were different, and such as, in my opinion, allowed a far wider sphere, and a deeper and more human interest. Critics are too apt to forget, that rules are but means to an end; consequently, where the ends are different, the rules must be likewise so. We must have ascertained what the end is, before we can determine what the rules ought to be. Judging under this impression, I did not hesitate to declare my full conviction, that the consummate judgment of Shakspere, not only in the general construction, but in all the detail of his dramas, impressed me with greater wonder, than even the might of his genius, or the depth of his philosophy."—S. T. Coleridge, note to chap. ii. of the *Biographia Literaria*.

If indeed "King Lear" were to be tried by the laws which Aristotle established, and Sophocles obeyed, it must be at once admitted to be outrageously irregular; and supposing the rules regarding the unities to be founded on man and nature, Shakspere must be condemned for arraying his works in charms with which they ought never to have been decorated. I have no doubt, however, that both were right in their divergent courses, and that they arrived at the same conclusion by a different process.

Without entering into matters which must be generally known to persons of education, respecting the origin of tragedy and comedy among the Greeks, it may be observed, that the unities grew mainly out of the size and construction of the ancient theatres: the plays represented were made to include within a short space of time events which it is impossible should have occurred in that short space. This fact alone establishes, that all dramatic performances were then looked upon merely as ideal. It is the same with us: nobody supposes that a tragedian suffers real pain when he is stabbed or tortured; or that a comedian is in fact transported with delight when successful in pretended love.

If we want to witness mere pain, we can visit the hospitals: if we seek the exhibition of mere pleasure, we can find it in ball-rooms. It is the representation of it, not the reality, that we require, the imitation, and not the thing itself; and we pronounce it good or bad in proportion as the representation is an incorrect, or a correct imitation. The true pleasure we derive from theatrical performances arises from the fact that they are unreal and fictitious. If dying agonies were unfeigned, who, in these days of civilisation, could derive gratification from beholding them?

Performances in a large theatre made it necessary that the human voice should be unnaturally and unmusically stretched; and hence the introduction of recitative, for the purpose of rendering pleasantly artificial the distortion of

the face, and straining of the voice, occasioned by the magnitude of the building. The fact that the ancient choruses were always on the stage made it impossible that any change of place should be represented, or even supposed.

The origin of the English stage is less boastful than that of the Greek stage: like the constitution under which we live, though more barbarous in its derivation, it gives more genuine and more diffused liberty, than Athens in the zenith of her political glory ever possessed. Our earliest dramatic performances were religious, founded chiefly upon Scripture history; and, although countenanced by the clergy, they were filled with blasphemies and ribaldry, such as the most hardened and desperate of the present day would not dare to utter. In these representations vice and the principle of evil were personified; and hence the introduction of fools and clowns in dramas of a more advanced period.

While Shakspere accommodated himself to the taste and spirit of the times in which he lived, his genius and his judgment taught him to use these characters with terrible effect, in aggravating the misery and agony of some of his most distressing scenes. This result is especially obvious in "King Lear:" the contrast of the Fool wonderfully heightens the colouring of some of the most painful situations, where the old monarch in the depth and fury of his despair, complains to the warring elements of the ingratitude of his daughters.

> "——————— Spit, fire! spout, rain!
> Nor rain, wind, thunder, fire, are my daughters:
> I tax not you, you elements, with unkindness,
> I never gave you kingdom, call'd you children;
> You owe me no subscription: then, let fall
> Your horrible pleasure; here I stand, your slave,
> A poor, infirm, weak, and despis'd old man."
>
> *King Lear*, Act iii., Scene 2.

Just afterwards, the Fool interposes, to heighten and inflame the passion of the scene.

In other dramas, though perhaps in a less degree, our great poet has evinced the same skill and felicity of treatment; and in no instance can it be justly alleged of him, as it may be of some of the ablest of his contemporaries, that he introduced his fool, or his clown, merely for the sake of exciting the laughter of his audiences. Shakspere had a loftier and a better purpose, and in this respect availed himself of resources, which, it would almost seem, he alone possessed.

Report of the Third Lecture.

The following report of the third lecture is taken from the "Morning Chronicle":—

"Last night Mr. Coleridge delivered his third lecture. He commenced by resuming his definition, or rather, as he expressed it, his description of poetry. He said that the proper antithesis of poetry was not prose, but science, and that the former was distinguished from the latter by having intellectual pleasure for its object, and attaining its end by the language natural to us in a state of powerful excitement. It was different from other kinds of composition by producing pleasure from the whole, in consistency with the subordinate pleasure from the component parts; and the design of it was to communicate as much immediate pleasure as is consistent with the largest sum of pleasure from the whole. It is not enough that the poet renders more grateful what is already pleasing, but he must perform the more difficult duty, by the magic of his art, of extracting pleasure from pain. The lecturer having much amplified in this portion of his address, deeming it absolutely necessary that it should be correctly understood, in order that what he should in future offer might be intelligible; he next adverted to some passages in the Psalms, and Isaiah,

to show the numerous hexameters with which the sacred writings abound, as the poetical form in which we express ourselves under the strong impulses of passion. Having disposed of this introductory matter, he advanced to the consideration of the wonderful powers of Shakspere, which he prefaced with some remarks on the Unities, particularly those of time and place, the neglect of which he justified in our great poet, pointing out the reasons which made it necessary that by the Greek dramatists they should be attentively regarded. Among these were the constant presence of the chorus, and the extent of the theatres adapted to receive the entire state within the inclosure. Among the objections to Shakspere, he observed, that it had been said that he was not a close copyist of nature. Mr. Coleridge contended that such a transcript of nature, instead of being a beauty, would be a blemish; that his business was not to copy, but to imitate. It was not the Nurse in 'Romeo and Juliet,' not the Dogberry in another of his productions, we admired, but it was the poet himself, assuming these shapes, and exhibiting under these forms all the force and magnitude of his own powers. It reminded him, said the lecturer, of the Proteus in the elegant mythology of the Ancients, who became a sea, or a lion; but under these and the multitudinous resemblances he assumed retaining always the awful character of the divinity. Mr. Coleridge concluded with remarking that in his future addresses he should perhaps shock the feelings of many of his auditors by differing in sentiment from those whom he had long venerated, but he must make every other consideration yield to the paramount authority of truth, whatever might be the consequences to himself and others."

Report of the Fourth Lecture.

In the "Morning Chronicle" we find the following report of the fourth lecture:—

"The Lecturer commenced his address with adverting to the period when Shakspere wrote, and the discouragements of the poet from the prejudices which prevailed against his divine art. He conceived, with Malone, that Shakspere began his public career about 1591, when he was twenty-seven years of age. From the rank his father sustained, he did not credit the stories of the humble situation of the poet, whose earliest productions he considered to be 'Venus and Adonis,' and 'Lucrece,' and from these it was easy to predict his future greatness. '*Poeta nascitur non fit.*' With these models we could discern that he possessed at least two indications of his character—he was not merely endowed with a thirst for the end, but he enjoyed an ample capability of the means; and in the selection of his subject he distinguished one that was far removed from his private interests, feelings, and circumstances. A third was that the 'Venus and Adonis' is immediate in its impulse on the senses; everything is seen and heard, as if represented by the most consummate actors. The poet, not as Ariosto, not as Wieland, speaks to our sensual appetites; but he has by his wonderful powers raised the student to his own level, a thousand exterior images forming his rich drapery, and all tending to profound reflection, so as to overpower and extinguish everything derogatory and humiliating. As little can the mind, thus agitated, yield to low desire, as the mist can sleep on the surface of our northern Windermere, when the strong wind is driving the lake onward with foam and billows before it. There are three requisites to form the poet: 1. Sensibility; 2. Imagination; 3. Power of Association. The last and least is

principally conspicuous in this production; but although the least, it is yet a characteristic and great excellence of his art. The Lecturer having read the description of the horse and the hare in the same piece, next proceeded to discuss the merits of the 'Lucreece,' in which, he said, we observe the impetuous vigour and activity, with a much larger display of profound reflection, and a perfect dominion over the whole of our language—but nothing deeply pathetic.

"Shakspere was no child of nature, he was not possessed, but he was in possession of all. He was under no exterior control, but early comprehending every part and incident of human being, his knowledge became habitual, and at length he acquired that superiority by which, obtaining the two golden pillars of our English Parnassus, he gave the second to Milton, preserving for himself the first.

"In examining the dramatic works of Shakspere, Mr. Coleridge said he should rather pursue the psychological than the chronological order, which had been so warmly disputed. To the first stage he should refer 'Love's Labour's Lost,' 'All's Well that Ends Well,' 'Romeo and Juliet,' 'A Midsummer Night's Dream,' 'As You Like It,' 'Twelfth Night,' which was produced when the genius of the poet was ripening. Then he should follow him through 'Troilus and Cressida,' 'Cymbeline,' 'The Merchant of Venice,' and 'Much Ado about Nothing.' Last, to the grandest efforts of his pen, 'Macbeth,' 'Lear,' 'Hamlet,' and 'Othello.' These interesting subjects were reserved for the next and the ensuing lectures. After some short comparative observations, principally in vindication of the great dramatists, Mr. Coleridge concluded with a single passage from Burns, to show the capacity of the poet to give novelty and freshness, profundity and wisdom, entertainment and instruction, to the most familiar objects. This is eminently conspicuous, when the transient cha-

racter of his subject is thus beautifully expressed by the Scottish bard :—

> "'Like snow that falls upon a river,
> A moment white, then gone for ever.'"

Note of Mr. Collier on the Fourth Lecture, from his Preface.

"I have no note of my own of Coleridge's fourth Lecture, but among my mother's papers I met with a memorandum by her . . . . . which she had made after that Lecture, from which I learn, that in it Coleridge especially treated of the order in which Shakspere had written his dramas. There they stand thus—

Love's Labour's Lost.	
Romeo and Juliet.	Youthful Plays.
All's Well that Ends Well.	
Midsummer Night's Dream.	
As You Like It.	
Twelfth Night.	Manly Plays.
Measure for Measure.	
Much Ado about Nothing.	
Merchant of Venice.	
Troilus and Cressida.	
Cymbeline.	
Macbeth.	
King Lear.	Mature Plays.
Hamlet.	
Othello.	
Tempest.	
Winter's Tale.	

"He proposed to speak of the historical dramas separately, but it is not stated in what order he meant to take them. We see above, that 'As You Like It' he placed among

the plays written in manhood, and there is no mention of 'Titus Andronicus,' 'The Two Gentlemen of Verona,' 'Coriolanus,' 'Timon of Athens,' 'Julius Cæsar,' and some others. As above, Coleridge might not intend to enumerate all."

Compare with this the remarks, in the second division of this volume, on the order of Shakspere's plays.

LECTURE VI.

THE recollection of what has been said by some of his biographers, on the supposed fact that Milton received corporal punishment at college, induces me to express my entire dissent from the notion, that flogging or caning has a tendency to degrade and debase the minds of boys at school. In my opinion it is an entire mistake; since this species of castigation has not only been inflicted time out of mind, but those who are subjected to it are well aware that the very highest persons in the realm, and those to whom people are accustomed to look up with most respect and reverence, such as the judges of the land, have quietly submitted to it in their pupilage.

I well remember, about twenty years ago, an advertisement from a schoolmaster, in which he assured tender-hearted and foolish parents, that corporal punishment was never inflicted, except in cases of absolute necessity; and that even then the rod was composed of lilies and roses, the latter, I conclude, stripped of their thorns. What, let me ask, has been the consequence, in many cases, of the abolition of flogging in schools? Reluctance to remove a pimple has not unfrequently transferred the disease to the vitals: sparing the rod, for the correction of minor faults, has ended in the commission of the highest crimes. A man of great reputation[1] (I should rather say of great notoriety) sometimes punished the pupils under his care by suspending them from the ceiling in baskets, exposed to the deri-

[1] See H. C. Robinson's Diary, Dec. 5, pp. 22, 24.

sion of their school-fellows; at other times he pinned upon the clothes of the offender a number of last dying speeches and confessions, and employed another boy to walk before the culprit, making the usual monotonous lamentation and outcry.

On one occasion this absurd, and really degrading, punishment was inflicted because a boy read with a tone, although, I may observe in passing, that reading with intonation is strictly natural, and therefore truly proper, excepting in the excess.[1]

Then, as to the character and effect of the punishment just noticed, what must a parent of well regulated and instructed mind think of the exhibition of his son in the

[1] "This was the Lecturer's own mode of reading verse, and even in prose there was an approach to intonation. I have heard him read Spenser with such an excess (to use his own word) in this respect, that it almost amounted to a song. In blank verse it was less, but still apparent. Milton's 'Liberty of unlicensed Printing' was a favourite piece of rhetorical writing, and portions of it I have heard Coleridge recite, never without a sort of habitual rise and fall of the voice."—J. P. C.

This method of reading verse, one, at least, of Coleridge's hearers disapproved of—Mr. H. H. Carwardine. He knew Coleridge personally, and took notes of his lectures in 1818, which notes we shall produce later on. "Mr. C.," he remarks, "has a solemn and pompous mode of delivery, which he applies indiscriminately to the elevated and the familiar; and he reads poetry, I think, as ill as any man I ever heard." See "Notes and Queries," April 2, 1870.

Emerson, speaking of his visit to Coleridge in 1833, records: "When I rose to go, he said, 'I do not know whether you care about poetry, but I will repeat some verses I lately made on my baptismal anniversary,' and he recited with strong emphasis, standing, ten or twelve lines, beginning,

'Born unto God in Christ—

The quotation will be found in chap. i. of "English Traits."

Gillman's opinion of Coleridge's reading characteristically differs from those of these critics. "His quotations," he says, "from the poets, of high character, were most feelingly and most luminously given, as by one inspired with the subject."—GILLMAN'S *Life of Coleridge*, p. 336.

manner I have described? Here, indeed, was debasement of the worst and lowest kind; for the feelings of a child were outraged, and made to associate and connect themselves with the sentence on an abandoned and shameless criminal. Who would not prefer the momentary, but useful, impression of flogging, to this gross attack upon the moral feelings and self-respect of a boy? Again, as to the proper mode of reading: why is a tone in reading to be visited as a criminal offence, especially when the estimate of that offence arises out of the ignorance and incompetence of the master? Every man who reads with true sensibility, especially poetry, must read with a tone, since it conveys, with additional effect, the harmony and rhythm of the verse, without in the slightest degree obscuring the meaning. That is the highest point of excellence in reading, which gives to everything, whether of thought or language, its most just expression. There may be a wrong tone, as a right, and a wrong tone is of course to be avoided; but a poet writes in measure, and measure is best made apparent by reading with a tone, which heightens the verse, and does not in any respect lower the sense. I defy any man, who has a true relish of the beauty of versification, to read a canto of "The Fairy Queen," or a book of "Paradise Lost," without some species of intonation.

In various instances we are hardly sensible of its existence, but it does exist, and persons have not scrupled to say, and I believe it, that the tone of a good reader may be set to musical notation. If in these, and in other remarks that fall from me, I appear dogmatical, or dictatorial, it is to be borne in mind, that every man who takes upon himself to lecture, requires that he should be considered by his hearers capable of teaching something that is valuable, or of saying something that is worth hearing. In a mixed audience not a few are desirous of instruction, and some

require it; but placed in my present situation I consider myself, not as a man who carries moveables into an empty house, but as a man who, entering a generally well furnished dwelling, exhibits a light which enables the owner to see what is still wanting. I endeavour to introduce the means of ascertaining what is, and is not, in a man's own mind.

Not long since,[1] when I lectured at the Royal Institution, I had the honour of sitting at the desk so ably occupied by Sir Humphry Davy, who may be said to have elevated the art of chemistry to the dignity of a science; who has discovered that one common law is applicable to the mind and to the body, and who has enabled us to give a full and perfect Amen to the great axiom of Lord Bacon, that knowledge is power. In the delivery of that course I carefully prepared my first essay, and received for it a cold suffrage of approbation: from accidental causes I was unable to study the exact form and language of my second lecture, and when it was at an end, I obtained universal and heartfelt applause. What a lesson was this to me not to elaborate my materials, nor to consider too nicely the expressions I should employ, but to trust mainly to the extemporaneous ebullition of my thoughts. In this conviction I have ventured to come before you here; and may I add a hope, that what I offer will be received in a similar spirit? It is true that my matter may not be so accurately arranged: it may not dovetail and fit at all times as nicely as could be wished; but you shall have my thoughts warm from my heart, and fresh from my understanding: you shall have the whole skeleton, although the bones may not be put together with the utmost anatomical skill.

The immense advantage possessed by men of genius over men of talents can be illustrated in no stronger manner,

[1] In 1810. See the extract from Mr. Collier's Diary, dated October 29, in the introductory matter, in which also Coleridge relates this experience.

than by a comparison of the benefits resulting to mankind from the works of Homer and of Thucydides. The merits and claims of Thucydides, as a historian, are at once admitted; but what care we for the incidents of the Peloponnesian War? An individual may be ignorant of them, as far as regards the particular narrative of Thucydides; but woe to that statesman, or, I may say, woe to that man, who has not availed himself of the wisdom contained in "the tale of Troy divine!"

Lord Bacon has beautifully expressed this idea, where he talks of the instability and destruction of the monuments of the greatest heroes, and compares them with the everlasting writings of Homer, one word of which has never been lost since the days of Pisistratus. Like a mighty ship, they have passed over the sea of time, not leaving a mere ideal track, which soon altogether disappears, but leaving a train of glory in its wake, present and enduring, daily acting upon our minds, and ennobling us by grand thoughts and images: to this work, perhaps, the bravest of our soldiery may trace and attribute some of their heroic achievements. Just as the body is to the immortal mind, so are the actions of our bodily powers in proportion to those by which, independent of individual continuity, we are governed for ever and ever; by which we call, not only the narrow circle of mankind (narrow comparatively) as they now exist, our brethren, but by which we carry our being into future ages, and call all who shall succeed us our brethren, until at length we arrive at that exalted state, when we shall welcome into Heaven thousands and thousands, who will exclaim—"To you I owe the first development of my imagination; to you I owe the withdrawing of my mind from the low brutal part of my nature, to the lofty, the pure, and the perpetual."

Adverting to the subject more immediately before us, I may observe that I have looked at the reign of Elizabeth,

interesting on many accounts, with peculiar pleasure and satisfaction, because it furnished circumstances so favourable to the existence, and to the full development of the powers of Shakspere. The Reformation, just completed, had occasioned unusual activity of mind, a passion, as it were, for thinking, and for the discovery and use of words capable of expressing the objects of thought and invention. It was, consequently, the age of many conceits, and an age when, for a time, the intellect stood superior to the moral sense.

The difference between the state of mind in the reign of Elizabeth, and in that of Charles I. is astonishing. In the former period there was an amazing development of power, but all connected with prudential purposes—an attempt to reconcile the moral feeling with the full exercise of the powers of the mind, and the accomplishment of certain practical ends. Then lived Bacon, Burghley, Sir Walter Raleigh, Sir Philip Sidney, and a galaxy of great men, statesmen, lawyers, politicians, philosophers, and poets; and it is lamentable that they should have degraded their mighty powers to such base designs and purposes, dissolving the rich pearls of their great faculties in a worthless acid, to be drunken by a harlot. What was seeking the favour of the Queen, to a man like Bacon, but the mere courtship of harlotry?

Compare this age with that of the republicans: that indeed was an awful age, as compared with our own. England may be said to have then overflowed from the fulness of grand principle—from the greatness which men felt in themselves, abstracted from the prudence with which they ought to have considered whether their principles were, or were not, adapted to the condition of mankind at large. Compare the revolution then effected with that of a day not long past, when the bubbling-up and overflowing was occasioned by the elevation of the dregs—when there

was a total absence of all principle, when the dregs had risen from the bottom to the top, and thus converted into scum, founded a monarchy to be the poisonous bane and misery of the rest of mankind.

It is absolutely necessary to recollect, that the age in which Shakspere lived was one of great abilities applied to individual and prudential purposes, and not an age of high moral feeling and lofty principle, which gives a man of genius the power of thinking of all things in reference to all. If, then, we should find that Shakspere took these materials as they were presented to him, and yet to all effectual purposes produced the same grand result as others attempted to produce in an age so much more favourable, shall we not feel and acknowledge the purity and holiness of genius—a light, which, however it might shine on a dunghill, was as pure as the divine effluence which created all the beauty of nature?

One of the consequences of the idea prevalent at the period when Shakspere flourished, viz., that persons must be men of talents in proportion as they were gentlemen, renders certain characters in his dramas natural with reference to the date when they were drawn: when we read them we are aware that they are not of our age, and in one sense they may be said to be of no age. A friend of mine well remarked of Spenser, that he is out of space: the reader never knows where he is, but still he knows, from the consciousness within him, that all is as natural and proper, as if the country where the action is laid were distinctly pointed out, and marked down in a map. Shakspere is as much out of time, as Spenser is out of space; yet we feel conscious, though we never knew that such characters existed, that they might exist, and are satisfied with the belief in their existence.

This circumstance enabled Shakspere to paint truly, and according to the colouring of nature, a vast number

of personages by the simple force of meditation: he had only to imitate certain parts of his own character, or to exaggerate such as existed in possibility, and they were at once true to nature, and fragments of the divine mind that drew them. Men who see the great luminary of our system through various optical instruments declare that it seems either square, triangular, or round, when in truth it is still the sun, unchanged in shape and proportion. So with the characters of our great poet: some may think them of one form, and some of another; but they are still nature, still Shakspere, and the creatures of his meditation.

When I use the term meditation, I do not mean that our great dramatist was without observation of external circumstances: quite the reverse; but mere observation may be able to produce an accurate copy, and even to furnish to other men's minds more than the copyist professed; but what is produced can only consist of parts and fragments, according to the means and extent of observation. Meditation looks at every character with interest, only as it contains something generally true, and such as might be expressed in a philosophical problem.

Shakspere's characters may be reduced to a few—that is to say, to a few classes of characters.[1] If you take his gentlemen, for instance, Biron is seen again in Mercutio, in Benedick, and in several others. They are men who combine the politeness of the courtier with the faculties of high intellect—those powers of combination and severance which only belong to an intellectual mind. The wonder is how

[1] "Say not that I am recommending abstractions, for these class-characteristics which constitute the instructiveness of a character are so modified and particularized in each person of the Shaksperian drama, that life itself does not excite more distinctly that sense of individuality which belongs to real existence."—From the "Friend."

See remark on Kent, in the notes on Lear, Act i., Sc. 1, in the fourth section of the second division of this volume: also, notes on Chaucer; Appendix, III.

Shakspere can thus disguise himself, and possess such miraculous powers of conveying what he means without betraying the poet, and without even producing the consciousness of him.

In the address of Mercutio regarding Queen Mab, which is so well known that it is unnecessary to repeat it, is to be noted all the fancy of the poet; and the language in which it is conveyed possesses such facility and felicity, that one would almost say that it was impossible for it to be thought, unless it were thought as naturally, and without effort, as Mercutio repeats it. This is the great art by which Shakspere combines the poet and the gentleman throughout, borrowing from his most amiable nature that which alone could combine them, a perfect simplicity of mind, a delight in all that is excellent for its own sake, without reference to himself as causing it, and by that which distinguishes him from all other poets, alluded to by one of his admirers in a short poem, where he tells us that while Shakspere possessed all the powers of a man, and more than a man, yet he had all the feelings, the sensibility, the purity, innocence, and delicacy of an affectionate girl of eighteen.

Before I enter upon the merits of the tragedy of "Romeo and Juliet," it will be necessary for me to say something of the language of our country. And here I beg leave to observe, that although I have announced these as lectures upon Milton and Shakspere, they are in reality, as also stated in the prospectus, intended to illustrate the principles of poetry: therefore, all must not be regarded as mere digression which does not immediately and exclusively refer to those writers. I have chosen them, in order to bring under the notice of my hearers great general truths; in fact, whatever may aid myself, as well as others, in deciding upon the claims of all writers of all countries.

The language, that is to say the particular tongue, in which Shakspere wrote, cannot be left out of consideration.

It will not be disputed, that one language may possess advantages which another does not enjoy; and we may state with confidence, that English excels all other languages in the number of its practical words. The French may bear the palm in the names of trades, and in military and diplomatic terms. Of the German it may be said, that, exclusive of many mineralogical words, it is incomparable in its metaphysical and psychological force: in another respect it nearly rivals the Greek,

> "The learned Greek, rich in fit epithets,
> Blest in the lovely marriage of pure words;"[1]

I mean in its capability of composition—of forming compound words. Italian is the sweetest and softest language: Spanish the most majestic. All these have their peculiar faults; but I never can agree that any language is unfit for poetry, although different languages, from the condition and circumstances of the people, may certainly be adapted to one species of poetry more than to another.

Take the French as an example. It is, perhaps, the most perspicuous and pointed language in the world, and therefore best fitted for conversation, for the expression of light and airy passion, attaining its object by peculiar and felicitous turns of phrase, which are evanescent, and, like the beautifully coloured dust on the wings of a butterfly, must not be judged by the test of touch. It appears as if it were all surface and had no substratum, and it constantly most dangerously tampers with morals, without positively offending decency. As the language for what is called modern genteel comedy, all others must yield to French.

Italian can only be deemed second to Spanish, and

[1] From Act i., Scene 1, of "Lingua, or the Combat of the Tongue and the Five Senses." This drama is reprinted in Dodsley's Old Plays, vol. v. (last edition), and the lines may be found on p. 107 of that volume.—J. P. C.

Spanish to Greek, which contains all the excellences of all languages. Italian, though sweet and soft, is not deficient in force and dignity; and I may appeal to Ariosto, as a poet who displays to the utmost advantage the use of his native tongue for all purposes, whether of passion, sentiment, humour, or description.

But in English I find that which is possessed by no other modern language, and which, as it were, appropriates it to the drama. It is a language made out of many, and it has consequently many words, which originally had the same meaning; but in the progress of society those words have gradually assumed different shades of meaning. Take any homogeneous language, such as German, and try to translate into it the following lines:—

> "But not to one, in this benighted age,
> Is that diviner inspiration given,
> That burns in Shakspere's or in Milton's page,
> The pomp and prodigality of heaven."
>
> GRAY'S *Stanzas to Bentley*.

In German it would be necessary to say "the pomp and *spendthriftness* of heaven," because the German has not, as we have, one word with two such distinct meanings, one expressing the nobler, the other the baser idea of the same action.

The monosyllabic character of English enables us, besides, to express more meaning in a shorter compass than can be done in any other language. In truth, English may be called the harvest of the unconscious wisdom of various nations, and was not the formation of any particular time, or assemblage of individuals. Hence the number of its passionate phrases—its metaphorical terms, not borrowed from poets, but adopted by them. Our commonest people, when excited by passion, constantly employ them: if a mother lose her child she is full of

the wildest fancies, and the words she uses assume a tone of dignity; for the constant hearing and reading of the Bible and Liturgy clothes her thoughts not only in the most natural, but in the most beautiful forms of language.

I have been induced to offer these remarks, in order to obviate an objection often made against Shakspere on the ground of the multitude of his conceits. I do not pretend to justify every conceit, and a vast number have been most unfairly imputed to him; for I am satisfied that many portions of scenes attributed to Shakspere were never written by him. I admit, however, that even in those which bear the strongest characteristics of his mind, there are some conceits not strictly to be vindicated. The notion against which I declare war is, that whenever a conceit is met with it is unnatural. People who entertain this opinion forget, that had they lived in the age of Shakspere, they would have deemed them natural. Dryden in his translation of Juvenal has used the words "Look round the world," which are a literal version of the original; but Dr. Johnson has swelled and expanded this expression into the following couplet:—

> "Let observation, with extensive view,
> Survey mankind from China to Peru."
> *Vanity of Human Wishes.*

mere bombast and tautology; as much as to say, "Let observation with extensive observation observe mankind extensively."

Had Dr. Johnson lived in the time of Shakspere, or even of Dryden, he would never have been guilty of such an outrage upon common sense and common language; and if people would, in idea, throw themselves back a couple of centuries, they would find that conceits, and even puns, were very allowable, because very natural. Puns

often arise out of a mingled sense of injury, and contempt of the person inflicting it, and, as it seems to me, it is a natural way of expressing that mixed feeling. I could point out puns in Shakspere, where they appear almost as if the first openings of the mouth of nature—where nothing else could so properly be said. This is not peculiar to puns, but is of much wider application: read any part of the works of our great dramatist, and the conviction comes upon you irresistibly, not only that what he puts into the mouths of his personages might have been said, but that it must have been said, because nothing so proper could have been said.

In a future lecture I will enter somewhat into the history of conceits, and show the wise use that has heretofore been made of them. I will now (and I hope it will be received with favour) attempt a defence of conceits and puns, taking my examples mainly from the poet under consideration. I admit, of course, that they may be misapplied; but throughout life, I may say, I never have discovered the wrong use of a thing, without having previously discovered the right use of it. To the young I would remark, that it is always unwise to judge of anything by its defects: the first attempt ought to be to discover its excellences. If a man come into my company and abuse a book, his invectives coming down like water from a shower bath, I never feel obliged to him; he probably tells me no news, for all works, even the best, have defects, and they are easily seen; but if a man show me beauties, I thank him for his information, because, in my time, I have unfortunately gone through so many volumes that have had little or nothing to recommend them. Always begin with the good—*a Jove principium*—and the bad will make itself evident enough, quite as soon as is desirable.

I will proceed to speak of Shakspere's wit, in connection with his much abused puns and conceits; because

an excellent writer, who has done good service to the public taste by driving out the nonsense of the Italian school, has expressed his surprise, that all the other excellences of Shakspere were, in a greater or less degree, possessed by his contemporaries: thus, Ben Jonson had one qualification, Massinger another, while he declares that Beaumont and Fletcher had equal knowledge of human nature, with more variety. The point in which none of them had approached Shakspere, according to this writer, was his wit. I own, I was somewhat shocked to see it gravely said in print, that the quality by which Shakspere was to be individualized from all others was, what is ordinarily called, wit. I had read his plays over and over, and it did not strike me that wit was his great and characteristic superiority. In reading Voltaire, or (to take a standard and most witty comedy as an example) in reading "The School for Scandal," I never experienced the same sort of feeling as in reading Shakspere.

That Shakspere has wit is indisputable, but it is not the same kind of wit as in other writers: his wit is blended with the other qualities of his works, and is, by its nature, capable of being so blended. It appears in all parts of his productions, in his tragedies, comedies, and histories: it is not like the wit of Voltaire, and of many modern writers, to whom the epithet "witty" has been properly applied, whose wit consists in a mere combination of words; but in at least nine times out of ten in Shakspere, the wit is produced, not by a combination of words, but by a combination of images.

It is not always easy to distinguish between wit and fancy. When the whole pleasure received is derived from surprise at an unexpected turn of expression, then I call it wit; but when the pleasure is produced not only by surprise, but also by an image which remains with us and gratifies for its own sake, then I call it fancy. I know of

no mode so satisfactory of distinguishing between wit and fancy. I appeal to the recollection of those who hear me, whether the greater part of what passes for wit in Shakspere, is not most exquisite humour, heightened by a figure, and attributed to a particular character? Take the instance of the flea on Bardolph's nose, which Falstaff compares to a soul suffering in purgatory. The images themselves, in cases like this, afford a great part of the pleasure.

These remarks are not without importance in forming a judgment of poets and writers in general: there is a wide difference between the talent which gives a sort of electric surprise by a mere turn of phrase, and that higher ability which produces surprise by a permanent medium, and always leaves something behind it, which satisfies the mind as well as tickles the hearing. The first belongs to men of cleverness, who, having been long in the world, have observed the turns of phrase which please in company, and which, passing away the moment, are passed in a moment, being no longer recollected than the time they take in utterance. We must all have seen and known such people; and I remember saying of one of them that he was like a man who squandered his estate in farthings: he gave away so many, that he must needs have been wealthy. This sort of talent by no means constitutes genius, although it has some affinity to it.

The wit of Shakspere is, as it were, like the flourishing of a man's stick, when he is walking, in the full flow of animal spirits: it is a sort of exuberance of hilarity which disburdens, and it resembles a conductor, to distribute a portion of our gladness to the surrounding air. While, however, it disburdens, it leaves behind what is weightiest and most important, and what most contributes to some direct aim and purpose.

I will now touch upon a very serious charge against

Shakspere—that of indecency and immorality. Many have been those who have endeavoured to exculpate him by saying, that it was the vice of his age; but he was too great to require exculpation from the accidents of any age. These persons have appealed to Beaumont and Fletcher, to Massinger, and to other less eminent dramatists, to prove that what is complained of was common to them all. Oh! shame and sorrow, if it were so: there is nothing common to Shakspere and to other writers of his day—not even the language they employed.

In order to form a proper judgment upon this point, it is necessary to make a distinction between manners and morals; and that distinction being once established, and clearly comprehended, Shakspere will appear as pure a writer, in reference to all that we ought to be, and to all that we ought to feel, as he is wonderful in reference to his intellectual faculties.

By manners I mean what is dependent on the particular customs and fashions of the age. Even in a state of comparative barbarism as to manners, there may be, and there is, morality. But give me leave to say that we have seen much worse times than those—times when the mind was so enervated and degraded, that the most distant associations, that could possibly connect our ideas with the basest feelings, immediately brought forward those base feelings, without reference to the nobler impulses; thus destroying the little remnant of humanity, excluding from the mind what is good, and introducing what is bad to keep the bestial nature company.

On looking through Shakspere, offences against decency and manners may certainly be pointed out; but let us examine history minutely, and we shall find that this was the ordinary language of the time, and then let us ask, where is the offence? The offence, so to call it, was not committed wantonly, and for the sake of offending, but for

the sake of merriment; for what is most observable in Shakspere, in reference to this topic, is that what he says is always calculated to raise a gust of laughter, that would, as it were, blow away all impure ideas, if it did not excite abhorrence of them.

Above all, let us compare him with some modern writers, the servile imitators of the French, and we shall receive a most instructive lesson. I may take the liberty of reading the following note, written by me after witnessing the performance of a modern play at Malta, about nine years ago:—"I went to the theatre, and came away without waiting for the entertainment. The longer I live, the more I am impressed with the exceeding immorality of modern plays: I can scarcely refrain from anger and laughter at the shamelessness, and the absurdity of the presumption which presents itself, when I think of their pretences to superior morality, compared with the plays of Shakspere."

Here let me pause for one moment; for while reading my note I call to mind a novel, on the sofa or toilet of nearly every woman of quality, in which the author gravely warns parents against the indiscreet communication to their children of the contents of some parts of the Bible, as calculated to injure their morals. Another modern author, who has done his utmost to undermine the innocence of the young of both sexes, has the effrontery to protest against the exhibition of the bare leg of a Corinthian female. My note thus pursues the subject:—

"In Shakspere there are a few gross speeches, but it is doubtful to me if they would produce any ill effect on an unsullied mind; while in some modern plays, as well as in some modern novels, there is a systematic undermining of all morality: they are written in the true cant of humanity, that has no object but to impose; where virtue is not placed in action, or in the habits that lead to action, but, like the title of a book I have heard of, they are 'a hot huddle of

indefinite sensations.' In these the lowest incitements to piety are obtruded upon us; like an impudent rascal at a masquerade, who is well known in spite of his vizor, or known by it, and yet is allowed to be impudent in virtue of his disguise. In short, I appeal to the whole of Shakspere's writings, whether his grossness is not the mere sport of fancy, dissipating low feelings by exciting the intellect, and only injuring while it offends? Modern dramas injure in consequence of not offending. Shakspere's worst passages are grossnesses against the degradations of our nature: those of our modern plays are too often delicacies directly in favour of them."

Such was my note, made nine years ago, and I have since seen every reason to adhere firmly to the opinions it expresses.

In my next lecture I will proceed to an examination of "Romeo and Juliet;" and I take that tragedy, because in it are to be found all the crude materials of future excellence. The poet, the great dramatic poet, is throughout seen, but the various parts of the composition are not blended with such harmony as in some of his after writings. I am directed to it, more than all, for this reason,—because it affords me the best opportunity of introducing Shakspere as a delineator of female character, and of love in all its forms, and with all the emotions which deserve that sweet and man-elevating name.

It has been remarked, I believe by Dryden, that Shakspere wrote for men only, but Beaumont and Fletcher (or rather "the gentle Fletcher") for women. I wish to begin by showing, not only that this is not true, but that, of all writers for the stage, he only has drawn the female character with that mixture of the real and of the ideal which belongs to it; and that there is no one female personage in the plays of all his contemporaries, of whom a man, seriously examining his heart and his good

sense, can say "Let that woman be my companion through life: let her be the object of my suit, and the reward of my success."[1]

[1] See Notes on the "Tempest," in "Lectures and Notes of 1818," Section IV.

LECTURE VII.

IN a former lecture[1] I endeavoured to point out the union of the Poet and the Philosopher, or rather the warm embrace between them, in the "Venus and Adonis" and "Lucrece" of Shakspere. From thence I passed on to "Love's Labour's Lost," as the link between his character as a Poet, and his art as a Dramatist; and I showed that, although in that work the former was still predominant, yet that the germs of his subsequent dramatic power were easily discernible.

I will now, as I promised in my last, proceed to "Romeo and Juliet," not because it is the earliest, or among the earliest of Shakspere's works of that kind, but because in it are to be found specimens, in degree, of all the excellences which he afterwards displayed in his more perfect dramas, but differing from them in being less forcibly evidenced, and less happily combined: all the parts are more or less present, but they are not united with the same harmony.

There are, however, in "Romeo and Juliet" passages where the poet's whole excellence is evinced, so that nothing

[1] Judging from the report of the "Morning Chronicle" of the fourth lecture, it must be to the fourth and fifth that Coleridge alludes. Happily we have another quarry in which to discover his ideas on this subject. The fifteenth chapter of the "Biographia Literaria" is entirely devoted to an examination of "the specific symptoms of poetic power elucidated in a critical analysis of Shakspere's 'Venus and Adonis" and 'Rape of Lucrece.'" The "Biographia" was published in 1816.—See Appendix.

superior to them can be met with in the productions of his after years. The main distinction between this play and others is, as I said, that the parts are less happily combined, or to borrow a phrase from the painter, the whole work is less in keeping. Grand portions are produced: we have limbs of giant growth; but the production, as a whole, in which each part gives delight for itself, and the whole, consisting of these delightful parts, communicates the highest intellectual pleasure and satisfaction, is the result of the application of judgment and taste. These are not to be attained but by painful study, and to the sacrifice of the stronger pleasures derived from the dazzling light which a man of genius throws over every circumstance, and where we are chiefly struck by vivid and distinct images. Taste is an attainment after a poet has been disciplined by experience, and has added to genius that talent by which he knows what part of his genius he can make acceptable, and intelligible to the portion of mankind for which he writes.

In my mind it would be a hopeless symptom, as regards genius, if I found a young man with anything like perfect taste. In the earlier works of Shakspere we have a profusion of double epithets, and sometimes even the coarsest terms are employed, if they convey a more vivid image; but by degrees the associations are connected with the image they are designed to impress, and the poet descends from the ideal into the real world so far as to conjoin both —to give a sphere of active operations to the ideal, and to elevate and refine the real.

In "Romeo and Juliet" the principal characters may be divided into two classes: in one class passion—the passion of love—is drawn and drawn truly, as well as beautifully; but the persons are not individualized farther than as the actor appears on the stage. It is a very just description and development of love, without giving, if I may so express myself, the philosophical history of it—without showing

how the man became acted upon by that particular passion, but leading it through all the incidents of the drama, and rendering it predominant.

Tybalt is, in himself, a common-place personage. And here allow me to remark upon a great distinction between Shakspere, and all who have written in imitation of him. I know no character in his plays (unless indeed Pistol be an exception), which can be called the mere portrait of an individual: while the reader feels all the satisfaction arising from individuality, yet that very individual is a sort of class character, and this circumstance renders Shakspere the poet of all ages.

Tybalt is a man abandoned to his passions—with all the pride of family, only because he thought it belonged to him as a member of that family, and valuing himself highly, simply because he does not care for death. This indifference to death is perhaps more common than any other feeling: men are apt to flatter themselves extravagantly, merely because they possess a quality which it is a disgrace not to have, but which a wise man never puts forward, but when it is necessary.

Jeremy Taylor, in one part of his voluminous works, speaking of a great man, says that he was naturally a coward, as indeed most men are, knowing the value of life, but the power of his reason enabled him, when required, to conduct himself with uniform courage and hardihood. The good bishop, perhaps, had in his mind a story, told by one of the ancients, of a Philosopher and a Coxcomb, on board the same ship during a storm: the Coxcomb reviled the Philosopher for betraying marks of fear: "Why are you so frightened? I am not afraid of being drowned: I do not care a farthing for my life."—"You are perfectly right," said the Philosopher, "for your life is not worth a farthing."—Shakspere never takes pains to make his characters win your esteem, but leaves it to the general command of the

passions, and to poetic justice. It is most beautiful to observe, in "Romeo and Juliet," that the characters principally engaged in the incidents are preserved innocent from all that could lower them in our opinion, while the rest of the personages, deserving little interest in themselves, derive it from being instrumental in those situations in which the more important personages develop their thoughts and passions.

Look at Capulet—a worthy, noble-minded old man of high rank, with all the impatience that is likely to accompany it. It is delightful to see all the sensibilities of our nature so exquisitely called forth; as if the poet had the hundred arms of the polypus, and had thrown them out in all directions to catch the predominant feeling. We may see in Capulet the manner in which anger seizes hold of everything that comes in its way, in order to express itself, as in the lines where he reproves Tybalt for his fierceness of behaviour, which led him to wish to insult a Montague, and disturb the merriment.—

> "Go to, go to;
> You are a saucy boy. Is't so, indeed?
> This trick may chance to scath you;—I know what.
> You must contrary me! marry, 'tis time.—
> Well said, my hearts!—You are a princox: go:
> Be quiet or—More light, more light!—For shame!
> I'll make you quiet.—What! cheerly, my hearts!"
>
> *Act I., Scene* 5.

The line

> "This trick may chance to scath you;—I know what,"

was an allusion to the legacy Tybalt might expect; and then, seeing the lights burn dimly, Capulet turns his anger against the servants. Thus we see that no one passion is so predominant, but that it includes all the parts of the character, and the reader never has a mere abstract of a

passion, as of wrath or ambition, but the whole man is presented to him—the one predominant passion acting, if I may so say, as the leader of the band to the rest.

It could not be expected that the poet should introduce such a character as Hamlet into every play; but even in those personages which are subordinate to a hero so eminently philosophical, the passion is at least rendered instructive, and induces the reader to look with a keener eye, and a finer judgment into human nature.

Shakspere has this advantage over all other dramatists—that he has availed himself of his psychological genius to develop all the minutiæ of the human heart: showing us the thing that, to common observers, he seems solely intent upon, he makes visible what we should not otherwise have seen: just as, after looking at distant objects through a telescope, when we behold them subsequently with the naked eye, we see them with greater distinctness, and in more detail, than we should otherwise have done.

Mercutio is one of our poet's truly Shaksperian characters; for throughout his plays, but especially in those of the highest order, it is plain that the personages were drawn rather from meditation than from observation, or to speak correctly, more from observation, the child of meditation. It is comparatively easy for a man to go about the world, as if with a pocket-book in his hand, carefully noting down what he sees and hears: by practice he acquires considerable facility in representing what he has observed, himself frequently unconscious of its worth, or its bearings. This is entirely different from the observation of a mind, which, having formed a theory and a system upon its own nature, remarks all things that are examples of its truth, confirming it in that truth, and, above all, enabling it to convey the truths of philosophy, as mere effects derived from, what we may call, the outward watchings of life.

Hence it is that Shakspere's favourite characters are full of such lively intellect. Mercutio is a man possessing all the elements of a poet: the whole world was, as it were, subject to his law of association. Whenever he wishes to impress anything, all things become his servants for the purpose: all things tell the same tale, and sound in unison. This faculty, moreover, is combined with the manners and feelings of a perfect gentleman, himself utterly unconscious of his powers. By his loss it was contrived that the whole catastrophe of the tragedy should be brought about: it endears him to Romeo, and gives to the death of Mercutio an importance which it could not otherwise have acquired.

I say this in answer to an observation, I think by Dryden (to which indeed Dr. Johnson has fully replied), that Shakspere having carried the part of Mercutio as far as he could, till his genius was exhausted, had killed him in the third Act, to get him out of the way. What shallow nonsense! As I have remarked, upon the death of Mercutio the whole catastrophe depends; it is produced by it. The scene in which it occurs serves to show how indifference to any subject but one, and aversion to activity on the part of Romeo, may be overcome and roused to the most resolute and determined conduct. Had not Mercutio been rendered so amiable and so interesting, we could not have felt so strongly the necessity for Romeo's interference, connecting it immediately, and passionately, with the future fortunes of the lover and his mistress.

But what am I to say of the Nurse? We have been told that her character is the mere fruit of observation; that it is like Swift's "Polite Conversation," certainly the most stupendous work of human memory, and of unceasingly active attention to what passes around us, upon record. The Nurse in "Romeo and Juliet" has sometimes been compared to a portrait by Gerard Dow,

which every hair was so exquisitely painted, that it would bear the test of the microscope. Now, I appeal confidently to my hearers whether the closest observation of the manners of one or two old nurses would have enabled Shakspere to draw this character of admirable generalization? Surely not. Let any man conjure up in his mind all the qualities and peculiarities that can possibly belong to a nurse, and he will find them in Shakspere's picture of the old woman: nothing is omitted. This effect is not produced by mere observation. The great prerogative of genius (and Shakspere felt and availed himself of it) is now to swell itself to the dignity of a god, and now to subdue and keep dormant some part of that lofty nature, and to descend even to the lowest character—to become everything, in fact, but the vicious.

Thus, in the Nurse[1] you have all the garrulity of old-age, and all its fondness; for the affection of old-age is one of the greatest consolations of humanity. I have often thought what a melancholy world this would be without children, and what an inhuman world without the aged.

You have also in the Nurse the arrogance of ignorance, with the pride of meanness at being connected with a great family. You have the grossness, too, which that situation never removes, though it sometimes suspends it; and, arising from that grossness, the little low vices attendant upon it, which, indeed, in such minds are scarcely vices.—Romeo at one time was the most delightful and excellent young man, and the Nurse all willingness to assist him; but her disposition soon turns in favour of

[1] "In a poem, still more in a lyric poem (and the Nurse in Shakspere's 'Romeo and Juliet' alone prevents me from extending the remark even to dramatic poetry, if, indeed, the Nurse itself can be deemed altogether a case in point), it is not possible to imitate truly a dull and garrulous discourser, without repeating the effects of dulness and garrulity."—*Biographia Literaria*, chap. xvii.

Paris, for whom she professes precisely the same admiration. How wonderfully are these low peculiarities contrasted with a young and pure mind, educated under different circumstances!

Another point ought to be mentioned as characteristic of the ignorance of the Nurse:—it is, that in all her recollections, she assists herself by the remembrance of visual circumstances. The great difference, in this respect, between the cultivated and the uncultivated mind is this—that the cultivated mind will be found to recall the past by certain regular trains of cause and effect; whereas, with the uncultivated mind, the past is recalled wholly by coincident images, or facts which happened at the same time. This position is fully exemplified in the following passages put into the mouth of the Nurse:—

"Even or odd, of all days in the year,
Come Lammas eve at night shall she be fourteen.
Susan and she—God rest all Christian souls:—
Were of an age.—Well, Susan is with God;
She was too good for me. But, as I said,
On Lammas eve at night shall she be fourteen;
That shall she, marry: I remember it well.
'Tis since the earthquake now eleven years;
And she was wean'd,—I never shall forget it,—
Of all the days of the year, upon that day;
For I had then laid wormwood to my dug,
Sitting in the sun under the dove-house wall:
My lord and you were then at Mantua—
Nay, I do bear a brain:—but, as I said,
When it did taste the wormwood on the nipple
Of my dug, and felt it bitter, pretty fool,
To see it tetchy, and fall out with the dug!
Shake, quoth the dove-house: 'twas no need, I trow,
To bid me trudge.
And since that time it is eleven years;
For then she could stand alone."

She afterwards goes on with similar visual impressions, so true to the character.—More is here brought into one portrait than could have been ascertained by one man's mere observation, and without the introduction of a single incongruous point.

I honour, I love, the works of Fielding as much, or perhaps more, than those of any other writer of fiction of that kind: take Fielding in his characters of postillions, landlords, and landladies, waiters, or indeed, of anybody who had come before his eye, and nothing can be more true, more happy, or more humorous; but in all his chief personages, Tom Jones for instance, where Fielding was not directed by observation, where he could not assist himself by the close copying of what he saw, where it is necessary that something should take place, some words be spoken, or some object described, which he could not have witnessed (his soliloquies for example, or the interview between the hero and Sophia Western before the reconciliation) and I will venture to say, loving and nothing the man and his productions as I do, that is where can be more forced and unnatural: the language gru[illegible] vivacity or spirit, the whole matter is incon[illegible] and totally destitute of psychological truth.

On the other hand, look at Shakspere: where can any character be produced that does not speak the language of nature? where does he not put into the mouths of his *dramatis personæ*, be they high or low, Kings or Constables, precisely what they must have said? Where, from observation, could he learn the language proper to Sovereigns, Queens, Noblemen, or Generals? yet he invariably uses it. Where, from observation, could he have learned such lines as these, which he puts into the mouth of Othello, when he is talking to Iago of Brabantio?

"Let him do his spite:
[illegible] I have done the signiory,

Shall out-tongue his complaints. 'Tis yet to know,
Which, when I know that boasting is an honour,
I shall promulgate, I fetch my life and being
From men of royal siege; and my demerits
May speak, unbonneted, to as proud a fortune
As this that I have reach'd: for know, Iago,
But that I love the gentle Desdemona,
I would not my unhoused free condition
Put into circumscription and confine
For the sea's worth."

Act. I., Scene 2.

I ask where was Shakspere to observe such language as this? If he did observe it, it was with the inward eye of meditation upon his own nature: for the time, he became Othello, and spoke as Othello, in such circumstances, must have spoken.

Another remark I may make upon "Romeo and Juliet" is, that in this tragedy the poet is not, as I have hinted, entirely blended with the dramatist,—at least, not in the degree to be afterwards noticed in "Lear," "Hamlet," "Othello," or "Macbeth." Capulet and Montague not unfrequently talk a language only belonging to the poet, and not so characteristic of, and peculiar to, the passions of persons in the situations in which they are placed—a mistake, or rather an indistinctness, which many of our later dramatists have carried through the whole of their productions.

When I read the song of Deborah, I never think that she is a poet, although I think the song itself a sublime poem: it is as simple a dithyrambic production as exists in any language; but it is the proper and characteristic effusion of a woman highly elevated by triumph, by the natural hatred of oppressors, and resulting from a bitter sense of wrong: it is a song of exultation on deliverance from these evils, a deliverance accomplished by herself. When she exclaims, "The inhabitants of the villages ceased, they

ceased in Israel, until that I, Deborah, arose, that I arose a mother in Israel," it is poetry in the highest sense: we have no reason, however, to suppose that if she had not been agitated by passion, and animated by victory, she would have been able so to express herself; or that if she had been placed in different circumstances, she would have used such language of truth and passion. We are to remember that Shakspere, not placed under circumstances of excitement, and only wrought upon by his own vivid and vigorous imagination, writes a language that invariably, and intuitively becomes the condition and position of each character.

On the other hand, there is a language not descriptive of passion, nor uttered under the influence of it, which is at the same time poetic, and shows a high and active fancy, as when Capulet says to Paris,—

> "Such comfort as do lusty young men feel,
> When well-apparell'd April on the heel
> Of limping winter treads, even such delight
> Among fresh female buds, shall you this night
> Inherit at my house."
>
> *Act I., Scene 2.*

Here the poet may be said to speak, rather than the dramatist; and it would be easy to adduce other passages from this play, where Shakspere, for a moment forgetting the character, utters his own words in his own person.

In my mind, what have often been censured as Shakspere's conceits are completely justifiable, as belonging to the state, age, or feeling of the individual. Sometimes, when they cannot be vindicated on these grounds, they may well be excused by the taste of his own and of the preceding age; as for instance, in Romeo's speech,

> "Here's much to do with hate, but more with love:—
> Why then, O brawling love! O loving hate!

O anything, of nothing first created![1]
O heavy lightness! serious vanity!
Misshapen chaos of well-seeming forms!
Feather of lead, bright smoke, cold fire, sick health!
Still-waking sleep, that is not what it is!"

Act I., Scene 1.

I dare not pronounce such passages as these to be absolutely unnatural, not merely because I consider the author a much better judge than I can be, but because I can understand and allow for an effort of the mind, when it would describe what it cannot satisfy itself with the description of, to reconcile opposites and qualify contradictions, leaving a middle state of mind more strictly appropriate to the imagination than any other, when it is, as it were, hovering between images. As soon as it is fixed on one image, it becomes understanding; but while it is unfixed and wavering between them, attaching itself permanently to none, it is imagination. Such is the fine description of Death in Milton:—

"The other shape,
If shape it might be call'd, that shape had none
Distinguishable in member, joint, or limb,
Or substance might be call'd, that shadow seem'd,
For each seem'd either: black it stood as night;
Fierce as ten furies, terrible as hell,
And shook a dreadful dart: what seem'd his head
The likeness of a kingly crown had on."

Paradise Lost, Book II.

The grandest efforts of poetry are where the imagination is called forth, not to produce a distinct form, but a strong working of the mind, still offering what is still repelled, and again creating what is again rejected; the result being what the poet wishes to impress, namely, the substitution of a sublime feeling of the unimaginable for a mere image. I have

[1] Read "create."

sometimes thought that the passage just read might be quoted as exhibiting the narrow limit of painting, as compared with the boundless power of poetry: painting cannot go beyond a certain point; poetry rejects all control, all confinement. Yet we know that sundry painters have attempted pictures of the meeting between Satan and Death at the gates of Hell; and how was Death represented? Not as Milton has described him, but by the most defined thing that can be imagined—a skeleton, the dryest and hardest image that it is possible to discover; which, instead of keeping the mind in a state of activity, reduces it to the merest passivity,—an image, compared with which a square, a triangle, or any other mathematical figure, is a luxuriant fancy.

It is a general but mistaken notion that, because some forms of writing, and some combinations of thought, are not usual, they are not natural; but we are to recollect that the dramatist represents his characters in every situation of life and in every state of mind, and there is no form of language that may not be introduced with effect by a great and judicious poet, and yet be most strictly according to nature. Take punning, for instance, which may be the lowest, but at all events is the most harmless, kind of wit, because it never excites envy. A pun may be a necessary consequence of association: one man, attempting to prove something that was resisted by another, might, when agitated by strong feeling, employ a term used by his adversary with a directly contrary meaning to that for which that adversary had resorted to it: it might come into his mind as one way, and sometimes the best, of replying to that adversary. This form of speech is generally produced by a mixture of anger and contempt, and punning is a natural mode of expressing them.

It is my intention to pass over none of the important so-called conceits of Shakspere, not a few of which are

introduced into his later productions with great propriety and effect. We are not to forget, that at the time he lived there was an attempt at, and an affectation of, quaintness and adornment, which emanated from the Court, and against which satire was directed by Shakspere in the character of Osrick in Hamlet. Among the schoolmen of that age, and earlier, nothing was more common than the use of conceits: it began with the revival of letters, and the bias thus given was very generally felt and acknowledged.

I have in my possession a dictionary of phrases, in which the epithets applied to love, hate, jealousy, and such abstract terms, are arranged; and they consist almost entirely of words taken from Seneca and his imitators, or from the schoolmen, showing perpetual antithesis, and describing the passions by the conjunction and combination of things absolutely irreconcilable.[1] In treating the matter thus, I am aware that I am only palliating the practice in Shakspere: he ought to have had nothing to do with merely temporary peculiarities: he wrote not for his own only, but for all ages, and so far I admit the use of some of his conceits to be a defect. They detract sometimes from his universality as to time, person, and situation.

If we were able to discover, and to point out the peculiar faults, as well as the peculiar beauties of Shakspere, it would materially assist us in deciding what authority ought to be attached to certain portions of what are generally called his works. If we met with a play, or certain scenes of a play, in which we could trace neither his defects nor his excellences, we should have the strongest reason for believing that he had had no hand in it. In the case of

[1] Thomas Watson, a contemporary of Shakspere, much praised in his day, fills forty Latin lines with a description of love in the manner Coleridge speaks of. He styles it, *mors vivida, mortua vita, dementia prudens, dolosa voluptas, inermis bellator, amara dulcedo, mors præsvia mortis*, and so on *ad nauseam*. Compare Romeo's description of love on p. 94.

scenes so circumstanced we might come to the conclusion that they were taken from the older plays, which, in some instances, he reformed or altered, or that they were inserted afterwards by some under-hand, in order to please the mob. If a drama by Shakspere turned out to be too heavy for popular audiences, the clown might be called in to lighten the representation; and if it appeared that what was added was not in Shakspere's manner, the conclusion would be inevitable, that it was not from Shakspere's pen.

It remains for me to speak of the hero and heroine, of Romeo and Juliet themselves; and I shall do so with unaffected diffidence, not merely on account of the delicacy, but of the great importance of the subject. I feel that it is impossible to defend Shakspere from the most cruel of all charges—that he is an immoral writer—without entering fully into his mode of portraying female characters, and of displaying the passion of love. It seems to me, that he has done both with greater perfection than any other writer of the known world, perhaps with the single exception of Milton in his delineation of Eve.

When I have heard it said, or seen it stated, that Shakspere wrote for man, but the gentle Fletcher for woman, it has always given me something like acute pain, because to me it seems to do the greatest injustice to Shakspere: when, too, I remember how much character is formed by what we read, I cannot look upon it as a light question, to be passed over as a mere amusement, like a game of cards or chess. I never have been able to tame down my mind to think poetry a sport, or an occupation for idle hours.

Perhaps there is no more sure criterion of refinement in moral character, of the purity of intellectual intention, and of the deep conviction and perfect sense of what our own nature really is in all its combinations, than the different definitions different men would give of love. I will not

detain you by stating the various known definitions, some of which it may be better not to repeat: I will rather give you one of my own, which, I apprehend, is equally free from the extravagance of pretended Platonism (which, like other things which super-moralize, is sure to demoralize) and from its grosser opposite.

Considering myself and my fellow-men as a sort of link between heaven and earth, being composed of body and soul, with power to reason and to will, and with that perpetual aspiration which tells us that this is ours for a while, but it is not ourselves; considering man, I say, in this two-fold character, yet united in one person, I conceive that there can be no correct definition of love which does not correspond with our being, and with that subordination of one part to another which constitutes our perfection. I would say therefore that—

"Love is a desire of the whole being to be united to some thing, or some being, felt necessary to its completeness, by the most perfect means that nature permits, and reason dictates."[1]

It is inevitable to every noble mind, whether man or woman, to feel itself, of itself, imperfect and insufficient, not as an animal only, but as a moral being. How wonderfully, then, has Providence contrived for us, by making that which is necessary to us a step in our exaltation to a higher and nobler state! The Creator has ordained that one should possess qualities which the other has not, and the union of both is the most complete ideal of human character. In everything the blending of the similar with the dissimilar is the secret of all pure delight. Who shall dare to stand alone, and vaunt himself, in himself, sufficient? In poetry it is the blending of passion with order that

[1] See Lecture VIII., and note, containing extract from letter to H. C. Robinson.

constitutes perfection: this is still more the case in morals, and more than all in the exclusive attachment of the sexes.

True it is, that the world and its business may be carried on without marriage; but it is so evident that Providence intended man (the only animal of all climates, and whose reason is pre-eminent over instinct) to be the master of the world, that marriage, or the knitting together of society by the tenderest, yet firmest ties, seems ordained to render him capable of maintaining his superiority over the brute creation. Man alone has been privileged to clothe himself, and to do all things so as to make him, as it were, a secondary creator of himself, and of his own happiness or misery: in this, as in all, the image of the Deity is impressed upon him.

Providence, then, has not left us to prudence only; for the power of calculation, which prudence implies, cannot have existed, but in a state which pre-supposes marriage. If God has done this, shall we suppose that He has given us no moral sense, no yearning, which is something more than animal, to secure that, without which man might form a herd, but could not be a society? The very idea seems to breathe absurdity.

From this union arise the paternal, filial, brotherly and sisterly relations of life; and every state is but a family magnified. All the operations of mind, in short, all that distinguishes us from brutes, originate in the more perfect state of domestic life.—One infallible criterion in forming an opinion of a man is the reverence in which he holds women. Plato has said, that in this way we rise from sensuality to affection, from affection to love, and from love to the pure intellectual delight by which we become worthy to conceive that infinite in ourselves, without which it is impossible for man to believe in a God. In a word, the grandest and most delightful of all promises has been

expressed to us by this practical state—our marriage with the Redeemer of mankind.

I might safely appeal to every man who hears me, who in youth has been accustomed to abandon himself to his animal passions, whether when he first really fell in love, the earliest symptom was not a complete change in his manners, a contempt and a hatred of himself for having excused his conduct by asserting, that he acted according to the dictates of nature, that his vices were the inevitable consequences of youth, and that his passions at that period of life could not be conquered? The surest friend of chastity is love: it leads us, not to sink the mind in the body, but to draw up the body to the mind—the immortal part of our nature. See how contrasted in this respect are some portions of the works of writers, whom I need not name, with other portions of the same works: the ebullitions of comic humour have at times, by a lamentable confusion, been made the means of debasing our nature, while at other times, even in the same volume, we are happy to notice the utmost purity, such as the purity of love, which above all other qualities renders us most pure and lovely.

Love is not, like hunger, a mere selfish appetite: it is an associative quality. The hungry savage is nothing but an animal, thinking only of the satisfaction of his stomach: what is the first effect of love, but to associate the feeling with every object in nature? the trees whisper, the roses exhale their perfumes, the nightingales sing, nay the very skies smile in unison with the feeling of true and pure love. It gives to every object in nature a power of the heart, without which it would indeed be spiritless.

Shakspere has described this passion in various states and stages, beginning, as was most natural, with love in the young. Does he open his play by making Romeo and Juliet in love at first sight—at the first glimpse, as any ordinary thinker would do? Certainly not: he knew what

he was about, and how he was to accomplish what he was about: he was to develop the whole passion, and he commences with the first elements—that sense of imperfection, that yearning to combine itself with something lovely. Romeo became enamoured of the idea he had formed in his own mind, and then, as it were, christened the first real being of the contrary sex as endowed with the perfections he desired. He appears to be in love with Rosaline; but, in truth, he is in love only with his own idea. He felt that necessity of being beloved which no noble mind can be without. Then our poet, our poet who so well knew human nature, introduces Romeo to Juliet, and makes it not only a violent, but a permanent love—a point for which Shakspere has been ridiculed by the ignorant and unthinking. Romeo is first represented in a state most susceptible of love, and then, seeing Juliet, he took and retained the infection.

This brings me to observe upon a characteristic of Shakspere, which belongs to a man of profound thought and high genius. It has been too much the custom, when anything that happened in his dramas could not easily be explained by the few words the poet has employed, to pass it idly over, and to say that it is beyond our reach, and beyond the power of philosophy—a sort of terra incognita for discoverers—a great ocean to be hereafter explored. Others have treated such passages as hints and glimpses of something now non-existent, as the sacred fragments of an ancient and ruined temple, all the portions of which are beautiful, although their particular relation to each other is unknown. Shakspere knew the human mind, and its most minute and intimate workings, and he never introduces a word, or a thought, in vain or out of place: if we do not understand him, it is our own fault or the fault of copyists and typographers; but study, and the possession of some small stock of the knowledge by which he worked

will enable us often to detect and explain his meaning. He never wrote at random, or hit upon points of character and conduct by chance; and the smallest fragment of his mind not unfrequently gives a clue to a most perfect, regular, and consistent whole.

As I may not have another opportunity, the introduction of Friar Laurence into this tragedy enables me to remark upon the different manner in which Shakspere has treated the priestly character, as compared with other writers. In Beaumont and Fletcher priests are represented as a vulgar mockery; and, as in others of their dramatic personages, the errors of a few are mistaken for the demeanour of the many: but in Shakspere they always carry with them our love and respect. He made no injurious abstracts: he took no copies from the worst parts of our nature; and, like the rest, his characters of priests are truly drawn from the general body.

It may strike some as singular, that throughout all his productions he has never introduced the passion of avarice. The truth is, that it belongs only to particular parts of our nature, and is prevalent only in particular states of society; hence it could not, and cannot, be permanent. The Miser of Molière and Plautus is now looked upon as a species of madman, and avarice as a species of madness. Elwes, of whom everybody has heard, was an individual influenced by an insane condition of mind; but, as a passion, avarice has disappeared. How admirably, then, did Shakspere foresee, that if he drew such a character it could not be permanent! he drew characters which would always be natural, and therefore permanent, inasmuch as they were not dependent upon accidental circumstances.

There is not one of the plays of Shakspere that is built upon anything but the best and surest foundation; the characters must be permanent—permanent while men continue men,—because they stand upon what is abso-

lutely necessary to our existence. This cannot be said even of some of the most famous authors of antiquity. Take the capital tragedies of Orestes, or of the husband of Jocasta: great as was the genius of the writers, these dramas have an obvious fault, and the fault lies at the very root of the action. In Œdipus a man is represented oppressed by fate for a crime of which he was not morally guilty; and while we read we are obliged to say to ourselves, that in those days they considered actions without reference to the real guilt of the persons.

There is no character in Shakspere in which envy is pourtrayed, with one solitary exception—Cassius, in "Julius Cæsar;" yet even there the vice is not hateful, inasmuch as it is counterbalanced by a number of excellent qualities and virtues. The poet leads the reader to suppose that it is rather something constitutional, something derived from his parents, something that he cannot avoid, and not something that he has himself acquired; thus throwing the blame from the will of man to some inevitable circumstance, and leading us to suppose that it is hardly to be looked upon as one of those passions that actually debase the mind.

Whenever love is described as of a serious nature, and much more when it is to lead to a tragical result, it depends upon a law of the mind, which, I believe, I shall hereafter be able to make intelligible, and which would not only justify Shakspere, but show an analogy to all his other characters.

Report of the Seventh Lecture.

The following Report of the Seventh Lecture, delivered on December 9, appeared in the "Dublin Correspondent," December 17, 1811. We borrow it from "Notes and Queries," August 4, 1855:—

"Dec. 17, 1811.

"Mr. Coleridge, having concluded the preliminary dis-

cussions on the nature of the Shaksperian drama, and the genius of the poet, and briefly noticed 'Love's Labour's Lost,' as the link which connected together the poet and the dramatist, proceeded, in his seventh lecture, to an elaborate review of 'Romeo and Juliet,' a play in which are to be found all the individual excellences of the author, but less happily combined than in his riper productions. This he observed to be the characteristic of genius, that its earliest works are never inferior in beauties, while the merits which taste and judgment can confer are of slow growth. Tybalt and Capulet he showed to be representatives of classes which he had observed in society, while in Mercutio he exhibited the first character of his own conception; a being formed of poetic elements, which meditation rather than observation had revealed to him; a being full of high fancy and rapid thought, conscious of his own powers, careless of life, generous, noble, a perfect gentleman. On his fate hangs the catastrophe of the tragedy. In commenting on the character of the Nurse, Mr. Coleridge strenuously resisted the suggestion that this is a mere piece of Dutch painting; a portrait in the style of Gerard Dow. On the contrary, her character is exquisitely generalized, and is subservient to the display of fine moral contrasts. Her fondness for Juliet is delightfully pathetic. 'What a melancholy world would this be without children, how inhuman without old age.' Her loquacity is characteristic of a vulgar mind, which recollects merely by coincidence of time and place, while cultivated minds connect their ideas by cause and effect. Having admitted that these lower persons might be suggested to Shakspere by observation, Mr. Coleridge reverted to his ideal characters, and said, 'I ask, where Shakspere observed this?' (some heroic sentiments by Othello) 'It was his inward eye of meditation on his own nature. He became Othello, and therefore spoke like him. Shakspere

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became, in fact, all beings but the vicious; but in drawing his characters he regarded essential not accidental relations. Avarice he never pourtrayed, for avarice is a factitious passion. The Miser of Plautus and Molière is already obsolete.' Mr. Coleridge entered into a discussion of the nature of fancy; showed how Shakspere, composing under a feeling of the unimaginable, endeavouring to reconcile opposites by producing a strong working of the mind, was led to those earnest conceits which are consistent with passion, though frigidly imitated by writers without any. He illustrated this part of his subject by a reference to Milton's conception of Death, which the painters absurdly endeavour to strip of its fanciful nature, and render definite by the figure of a skeleton, the dryest of all images, compared with which a square or a triangle is a luxuriant fancy.

"Mr. Coleridge postponed the examination of the hero and heroine of the piece, but prefaced his inquiry by remarks on the nature of love, which he defined to be 'a perfect desire of the whole being to be united to some thing or being which is felt necessary to its perfection, by the most perfect means that nature permits, and reason dictates;' and took occasion with great delicacy to contrast this link of our higher and lower nature, this noblest energy of our humane and social being, with what, by a gross misnomer, usurps its name; and asserted, that the criterion of honour and worth among men is their habit of sentiment on the subject of love.

"We are compelled to omit the partial illustration of his[1] in the characters of Romeo and Juliet, the continuation of which we are promised in the succeeding lecture."

Mr. H. C. Robinson inserted a report of this lecture in the "Morning Chronicle." See Diary, quoted above, Introductory matter, § 2.

[1] Read "this."

LECTURE VIII.

IT is impossible to pay a higher compliment to poetry, than to consider the effects it produces in common with religion, yet distinct (as far as distinction can be, where there is no division) in those qualities which religion exercises and diffuses over all mankind, as far as they are subject to its influence.

I have often thought that religion (speaking of it only as it accords with poetry, without reference to its more serious impressions) is the poetry of mankind, both having for their objects:—

1. To generalize our notions; to prevent men from confining their attention solely, or chiefly, to their own narrow sphere of action, and to their own individual circumstances. By placing them in certain awful relations it merges the individual man in the whole species, and makes it impossible for any one man to think of his future lot, or indeed of his present condition, without at the same time comprising in his view his fellow-creatures.

2. That both poetry and religion throw the object of deepest interest to a distance from us, and thereby not only aid our imagination, but in a most important manner subserve the interest of our virtues; for that man is indeed a slave, who is a slave to his own senses, and whose mind and imagination cannot carry him beyond the distance which his hand can touch, or even his eye can reach.

3. The grandest point of resemblance between them is,

that both have for their object (I hardly know whether the English language supplies an appropriate word) the perfecting, and the pointing out to us the indefinite improvement of our nature, and fixing our attention upon that. They bid us, while we are sitting in the dark at our little fire, look at the mountain-tops, struggling with darkness, and announcing that light which shall be common to all, in which individual interests shall resolve into one common good, and every man shall find in his fellow man more than a brother.

Such being the case, we need not wonder that it has pleased Providence, that the divine truths of religion should have been revealed to us in the form of poetry; and that at all times poets, not the slaves of any particular sectarian opinions, should have joined to support all those delicate sentiments of the heart (often when they were most opposed to the reigning philosophy of the day) which may be called the feeding streams of religion.

I have heard it said that an undevout astronomer is mad. In the strict sense of the word, every being capable of understanding must be mad, who remains, as it were, fixed in the ground on which he treads—who, gifted with the divine faculties of indefinite hope and fear, born with them, yet settles his faith upon that, in which neither hope nor fear has any proper field for display. Much more truly, however, might it be said that, an undevout poet is mad: in the strict sense of the word, an undevout poet is an impossibility. I have heard of verse-makers (poets they are not, and never can be) who introduced into their works such questions as these:—Whether the world was made of atoms?—Whether there is a universe?—Whether there is a governing mind that supports it? As I have said, verse-makers are not poets: the poet is one who carries the simplicity of childhood into the powers of manhood; who, with a soul unsubdued by habit,

unshackled by custom, contemplates all things with the freshness and the wonder of a child; and, connecting with it the inquisitive powers of riper years, adds, as far as he can find knowledge, admiration; and, where knowledge no longer permits admiration, gladly sinks back again into the childlike feeling of devout wonder.

The poet is not only the man made to solve the riddle of the universe, but he is also the man who feels where it is not solved. What is old and worn-out, not in itself, but from the dimness of the intellectual eye, produced by worldly passions and pursuits, he makes new: he pours upon it the dew that glistens, and blows round it the breeze that cooled us in our infancy. I hope, therefore, that if in this single lecture I make some demand on the attention of my hearers to a most important subject, upon which depends all sense of the worthiness or unworthiness of our nature, I shall obtain their pardon. If I afford them less amusement, I trust that their own reflections upon a few thoughts will be found to repay them.

I have been led to these observations by the tragedy of "Romeo and Juliet," and by some, perhaps, indiscreet expressions, certainly not well chosen, concerning falling in love at first sight. I have taken one of Shakspere's earliest works, as I consider it, in order to show that he, of all his contemporaries (Sir Philip Sidney alone excepted), entertained a just conception of the female character. Unquestionably, that gentleman of Europe—that all-accomplished man, and our beloved Shakspere, were the only writers of that age who pitched their ideas of female perfection according to the best researches of philosophy: compared with all who followed them, they stand as mighty mountains, the islands of a deluge, which has swallowed all the rest in the flood of oblivion.[1]

[1] "I remember, in conversing on this very point at a subsequent

I certainly do not mean, as a general maxim, to justify so foolish a thing as what goes by the name of love at first sight; but, to express myself more accurately, I should say that there is, and has always existed, a deep emotion of the mind, which might be called love momentaneous—not love at first sight, nor known by the subject of it to be or to have been such, but after many years of experience.[1]

I have to defend the existence of love, as a passion in itself fit and appropriate to human nature;—I say fit for human nature, and not only so, but peculiar to it, unshared either in degree or kind by any of our fellow creatures: it is a passion which it is impossible for any creature to feel, but a being endowed with reason, with the moral sense, and with the strong yearnings, which, like all other powerful effects in nature, prophesy some future effect.

If I were to address myself to the materialist, with reference to the human kind, and (admitting the three great laws common to all beings,—1, the law of self-preservation; 2, that of continuing the race; and 3, the care of the offspring till protection is no longer needed),—were to ask him, whether he thought any motives of prudence or duty enforced the simple necessity of preserving the race? or whether, after a course of serious reflection, he came to the conclusion, that it would be better to have a posterity, from a sense of duty impelling us to seek that as our object?—if, I say, I were to ask a

period.—I cannot fix the date.—Coleridge made a willing exception in favour of Spenser; but he added that the notions of the author of the 'Faery Queen' were often so romantic and heightened by fancy, that he could not look upon Spenser's females as creatures of our world; whereas the ladies of Shakspere and Sidney were flesh and blood, with their very defects and qualifications giving evidence of their humanity; hence the lively interest taken regarding them."—J. P. C.

[1] "Coleridge here," says Mr. Collier, "made a reference to, and cited a passage from, Hooker's 'Ecclesiastical Polity.'"

materialist, whether such was the real cause of the preservation of the species, he would laugh me to scorn; he would say that nature was too wise to trust any of her great designs to the mere cold calculations of fallible mortality.

Then the question comes to a short crisis:—Is, or is not, our moral nature a part of the end of Providence? or are we, or are we not, beings meant for society? Is that society, or is it not, meant to be progressive? I trust that none of my auditors would endure the putting of the question—Whether, independently of the progression of the race, every individual has it not in his power to be indefinitely progressive?—for, without marriage, without exclusive attachment, there could be no human society; herds, as I said, there might be, but society there could not be; there could be none of that delightful intercourse between father and child; none of the sacred affections; none of the charities of humanity; none of all those many and complex causes, which have raised us to the state we have already reached, could possibly have existence. All these effects are not found among the brutes; neither are they found among savages, whom strange accidents have sunk below the class of human beings, insomuch that a stop seems actually to have been put to their progressiveness.

We may, therefore, safely conclude that there is placed within us some element, if I may so say, of our nature—something which is as peculiar to our moral nature as any other part can be conceived to be, name it what you will,—name it, I will say for illustration, devotion,—name it friendship, or a sense of duty; but something there is, peculiar to our nature, which answers the moral end; as we find everywhere in the ends of the moral world, that there are proportionate material and bodily means of accomplishing them.

We are born, and it is our nature and lot to be composed of body and mind: but when our heart leaps up on hearing of the victories of our country, or of the rescue of the virtuous, but unhappy, from the hands of an oppressor; when a parent is transported at the restoration of a beloved child from deadly sickness; when the pulse is quickened, from any of these or other causes, do we therefore say, because the body interprets the emotions of the mind and sympathizes with them, asserting its claim to participation, that joy is not mental, or that it is not moral? Do we assert, that it was owing merely to fulness of blood that the heart throbbed, and the pulse played? Do we not rather say, that the regent, the mind, being glad, its slave, its willing slave, the body, responded to it, and obeyed the impulse? If we are possessed with a feeling of having done a wrong, or of having had a wrong done to us, and it excites the blush of shame or the glow of anger, do we pretend to say that, by some accident, the blood suffused itself into veins unusually small, and therefore that the guilty seemed to evince shame, or the injured indignation? In these things we scorn such instruction; and shall it be deemed a sufficient excuse for the materialist to degrade that passion, on which not only many of our virtues depend, but upon which the whole frame, the whole structure of human society rests? Shall we pardon him this debasement of love, because our body has been united to mind by Providence, in order, not to reduce the high to the level of the low, but to elevate the low to the level of the high? We should be guilty of nothing less than an act of moral suicide, if we consented to degrade that which on every account is most noble, by merging it in what is most derogatory: as if an angel were to hold out to us the welcoming hand of brotherhood, and we turned away from it, to wallow, as it were, with the hog in the mire.

One of the most lofty and intellectual of the poets of the time of Shakspere has described this degradation most wonderfully, where he speaks of a man, who, having been converted by the witchery of worldly pleasure and passion, into a hog, on being restored to his human shape still preferred his bestial condition:—

> "But one, above the rest in special,
> That had a hog been late, hight Grill by name,
> Repined greatly, and did him miscall,
> That from[1] a hoggish form him brought to natural.
>
> "Said Guyon, See the mind of beastly man!
> That hath so soon forgot the excellence
> Of his creation, when he life began,
> That now he chooseth, with vile difference,
> To be a beast and lack intelligence.
> To whom the Palmer thus:—The dunghill kind
> Delights in filth and foul incontinence:
> Let Grill be Grill, and have his hoggish mind;[2]
> But let us hence depart, whilst weather serves and wind."
>
> *Fairy Queen, Book II., c.* 12, *s.* 86-7.

The first feeling that would strike a reflecting mind, wishing to see mankind not only in an amiable but in a just light, would be that beautiful feeling in the moral world, the brotherly and sisterly affections,—the existence of strong affection greatly modified by the difference of sex; made more tender, more graceful, more soothing and conciliatory by the circumstance of difference, yet still remaining perfectly pure, perfectly spiritual. How glorious,

[1] Read—"That had from . . . ."

[2] The mysterious obliquity of our moral nature touched on here, has been sorrowfully recognized by higher natures than Grill's. The mediæval legend of Tannhauser and the hill of Venus admirably embodies this trait of humanity, as the legend of Prometheus does a nobler one. The legend, clearly enough the invention of an ascetic age, enshrines a truth and a warning for all time.

we may say, would be the effect, if the instances were rare; but how much more glorious, when they are so frequent as to be only not universal. This species of affection is the object of religious veneration with all those who love their fellow men, or who know themselves.

The power of education over the human mind is herein exemplified, and data for hope are afforded of yet unrealized excellences, perhaps dormant in our nature. When we see so divine a moral effect spread through all classes, what may we not hope of other excellences, of unknown quality, still to be developed?

By dividing the sisterly and fraternal affections from the conjugal, we have, in truth, two loves, each of them as strong as any affection can be, or ought to be, consistently with the performance of our duty, and the love we should bear to our neighbour. Then, by the former preceding the latter, the latter is rendered more pure, more even, and more constant: the wife has already learned the discipline of pure love in the character of a sister. By the discipline of private life she has already learned how to yield, how to influence, how to command. To all this are to be added the beautiful gradations of attachment which distinguish human nature; from sister to wife, from wife to child, to uncle, to cousin, to one of our kin, to one of our blood, to our near neighbour, to our county-man, and to our countryman.

The bad results of a want of this variety of orders, of this graceful subordination in the character of attachment, I have often observed in Italy in particular, as well as in other countries, where the young are kept secluded, not only from their neighbours, but from their own families—all closely imprisoned, until the hour when they are necessarily let out of their cages, without having had the opportunity of learning to fly—without experience, restrained by no kindly feeling, and detesting the control

which so long kept them from enjoying the full hubbub of licence.

The question is, How have nature and Providence secured these blessings to us? In this way:—that in general the affections become those which urge us to leave the paternal nest. We arrive at a definite time of life, and feel passions that invite us to enter into the world; and this new feeling assuredly coalesces with a new object. Suppose we are under the influence of a vivid feeling that is new to us: that feeling will more firmly combine with an external object, which is likewise vivid from novelty, than with one that is familiar.

To this may be added the aversion, which seems to have acted very strongly in rude ages, concerning anything common to us and to the animal creation. That which is done by beasts man feels a natural repugnance to imitate. The desire to extend the bond of relationship, in families which had emigrated from the patriarchal seed, would likewise have its influence.

All these circumstances would render the marriage of brother and sister unfrequent, and in simple ages an ominous feeling to the contrary might easily prevail. Some tradition might aid the objections to such a union; and, for aught we know, some law might be preserved in the Temple of Isis, and from thence obtained by the patriarchs, which would augment the horror attached to such connections. This horror once felt, and soon propagated, the present state of feeling on the subject can easily be explained.

Children begin as early to talk of marriage as of death, from attending a wedding, or following a funeral: a new young visitor is introduced into the family, and from association they soon think of the conjugal bond. If a boy tell his parent that he wishes to marry his sister, he is instantly checked by a stern look, and he is shown the

impossibility of such a union. The controlling glance of the parental eye is often more effectual than any form of words that could be employed; and in mature years a mere look often prevails where exhortation would have failed. As to infants, they are told, without any reason assigned, that it could not be so; and perhaps the best security for moral rectitude arises from a supposed necessity. Ignorant persons recoil from the thought of doing anything that has not been done, and because they have always been informed that it must not be done.

The individual has by this time learned the greatest and best lesson of the human mind—that in ourselves we are imperfect; and another truth, of the next, if not of equal, importance—that there exists a possibility of uniting two beings, each identified in their nature, but distinguished in their separate qualities, so that each should retain what distinguishes them, and at the same time each acquire the qualities of that being which is contradistinguished. This is perhaps the most beautiful part of our nature: the man loses not his manly character: he does not become less brave or less resolved to go through fire and water, if necessary, for the object of his affections: rather say, that he becomes far more brave and resolute. He then feels the beginnings of his moral nature: he then is sensible of its imperfection, and of its perfectibility. All the grand and sublime thoughts of an improved state of being then dawn upon him: he can acquire the patience of woman, which in him is fortitude: the beauty and susceptibility of the female character in him becomes a desire to display all that is noble and dignified. In short, the only true resemblance to a couple thus united is the pure blue sky of heaven: the female unites the beautiful with the sublime, and the male the sublime with the beautiful.

Throughout the whole of his plays Shakspere has evidently looked at the subject of love in this dignified light:

he has conceived it not only with moral grandeur, but with philosophical penetration. The mind of man searches for something which shall add to his perfection—which shall assist him; and he also yearns to lend his aid in completing the moral nature of another. Thoughts like these will occupy many of his serious moments: imagination will accumulate on imagination, until at last some object attracts his attention, and to this object the whole weight and impulse of his feelings will be directed.

Who shall say this is not love? Here is system, but it is founded upon nature: here are associations; here are strong feelings, natural to us as men, and they are directed and finally attached to one object:—who shall say this is not love?[1] Assuredly not the being who is the subject of

[1] Coleridge, who wrote the poem which commences—

"All thoughts, all passions, all delights,"

and letters to their sweethearts and wives for his comrades in the Light Dragoons (if we only had a few of these letters!), thus discourses on love, in a letter to H. C. Robinson, in 1811, before the delivery of these lectures:—

"Hassan's love"—he is criticizing a romance—"for Amina is beautifully described as having had a foundation from early childhood. And this I many years ago planned as the subject-matter of a poem, viz. long and deep affections suddenly, in one moment, flash-transmuted into *love*. In short, I believe that *love* (as distinguished both from lust and that habitual attachment which may include many objects diversifying itself by *degrees* only), that that *feeling* (or whatever it may be more aptly called), that specific mode of being, which one object only can possess, and possess totally, is always the abrupt creation of a moment, though years of *dawning* may have preceded. I said *dawning*, for often as I have watched the sun rising from the thinning, dilating blue to the whitening, to the fawn-coloured, the pink, the crimson, the glory, yet still the sun itself has always *started* up out of the horizon! Between the brightest hues of the dawning, and the first rim of the sun itself, there is a *chasm*—all before were differences of degrees, passing and dissolving into each other—but this is a difference of *kind*—a chasm of kind in a continuity of time; and as no man who had never watched for

these sensations.—If it be not love, it is only known that it is not by Him who knows all things. Shakspere has

the rise of the sun could understand what I mean, so can no man who has not been in love understand what love is, though he will be sure to imagine and believe that he does. Thus, ——— is by nature incapable of being in love, though no man more tenderly attached; hence he ridicules the existence of any other passion than a compound of lust with esteem and friendship, confined to one object, first by accidents of association, and permanently by the force of habit and a sense of duty. Now this will do very well—it will suffice to make a good husband; it may be even desirable (if the largest sum of easy and pleasurable sensations in this life be the right aim and end of human wisdom) that we should have this, and no more,—but still it is not *love*—and there is such a passion as love—which is no more a compound than oxygen, though like oxygen it has an almost universal affinity, and a long and finely graduated scale of elective attractions. It combines with lust—but how? Does lust call forth or occasion love? Just as much as the reek of the marsh calls up the sun. The sun calls up the vapour—attenuates, lifts it—it becomes a cloud—and now it is the veil of the divinity; the divinity, transpiercing it at once, hides and declares his presence. We *see*, we are conscious of *light* alone; but it is light embodied in the earthly nature, which that light itself awoke and sublimated. What is the body, but the fixture of the mind—the stereotype impression? Arbitrary are the symbols—yet symbols they are. Is terror in my soul?—my heart beats against my side. Is grief?—*tears* pour in my eyes. In her homely way, the body tries to interpret all the movements of the soul. Shall it not, then, imitate and symbolize that divinest movement of a finite spirit—the yearning to complete itself by union? Is there not a sex in souls? We have all eyes, cheeks, lips—but in a lovely woman are not the eyes womanly—yea, every form, in every motion of her whole frame, *womanly*? Were there not an identity in the substance, man and woman might *join*, but they could never *unify*; were there not throughout, in body and in soul, a corresponding and adapted difference, there might be addition, but there could be no combination. 1 and 1 = 2; but 1 cannot be multiplied into 1: $1 \times 1 = 1$. At best, it would be an idle echo, the same thing needlessly repeated, as the idiot told the clock—one, one, one, one, &c."

Notwithstanding these astute observations, Crabb Robinson ended his long life a bachelor:—possibly, to some extent, because of them.

Mr. H. N. Coleridge, in a note to the "Table Talk," remarks of his father-in-law, that he "was a great master in the art of love, but he had

therefore described Romeo as in love in the first instance with Rosaline, and so completely does he fancy himself in love that he declares, before he has seen Juliet,

> "When the devout religion of mine eye
> Maintains such falsehood, then turn tears to fires;
> And these, who, often drown'd, could never die,
> Transparent heretics, be burnt for liars.
> One fairer than my love? the all-seeing sun
> Ne'er saw her match since first the world begun."
>
> *Act I., Scene* 2.

This is in answer to Benvolio, who has asked Romeo to compare the supposed beauty of Rosaline with the actual

not studied in Ovid's school;" and he quotes a passage, that may well be inserted here, from "Coleridge's Poetical Works";—

"Love, truly such, is itself not the most common thing in the world, and mutual love still less so. But that enduring personal attachment, so beautifully delineated by Erin's sweet melodist, and still more touchingly, perhaps, in the well-known ballad, 'John Anderson, my Jo, John,' in addition to a depth and constancy of character of no every-day occurrence, supposes a peculiar sensibility and tenderness of nature; a constitutional communicativeness and utterance of heart and soul; a delight in the detail of sympathy, in the outward and visible signs of the sacrament within,—to count, as it were, the pulses of the life of love. But, above all, it supposes a soul which, even in the pride and summer-tide of life, even in the lustihood of health and strength, has felt oftenest and prized highest that which age cannot take away, and which in all our lovings is *the* love; I mean, that willing sense of the unsufficingness of the self for itself, which predisposes a generous nature to see, in the total being of another, the supplement and completion of its own; that quiet perpetual seeking which the presence of the beloved object modulates, not suspends, where the heart momently finds, and, finding again, seeks on; lastly, when 'life's changeful orb has passed the full,' a confirmed faith in the nobleness of humanity, thus brought home and pressed, as it were, to the very bosom of hourly experience; it supposes, I say, a heartfelt reverence for worth, not the less deep because divested of its solemnity by habit, by familiarity, by mutual infirmities, and even by a feeling of modesty which will arise in delicate minds, when they are conscious of possessing the same, or the correspondent excellence in their

beauty of other ladies; and in this full feeling of confidence Romeo is brought to Capulet's, as it were by accident: he sees Juliet, instantly becomes the heretic he has just before declared impossible, and then commences that completeness of attachment which forms the whole subject of the tragedy.

Surely Shakspere, the poet, the philosopher, who combined truth with beauty and beauty with truth, never dreamed that he could interest his auditory in favour of Romeo, by representing him as a mere weathercock, blown round by every woman's breath; who, having seen one, became the victim of melancholy, eating his own heart, concentrating all his hopes and fears in her, and yet, in an instant, changing, and falling madly in love with another. Shakspere must have meant something more than this, for this was the way to make people despise, instead of admiring his hero. Romeo tells us what was Shakspere's purpose: he shows us that he had looked at Rosaline with a different feeling from that with which he had looked at Juliet. Rosaline was the object to which his over-full heart had attached itself in the first instance: our imperfect nature, in proportion as our ideas are vivid, seeks after something in which those ideas may be realized.

So with the indiscreet friendships sometimes formed by men of genius: they are conscious of their own weakness, and are ready to believe others stronger than themselves, when, in truth, they are weaker: they have formed an

own characters. In short, there must be a mind, which, while it feels the beautiful and the excellent in the beloved as its own, and by right of love appropriates it, can call goodness its playfellow; and dares make sport of time and infirmity, while, in the person of a thousand-foldly endeared partner, we feel for aged virtue the caressing fondness that belongs to the innocence of childhood, and repeat the same attentions and tender courtesies which had been dictated by the same affection to the same object when attired in feminine loveliness or in manly beauty."

ideal in their own minds, and they want to see it realized; they require more than shadowy thought. Their own sense of imperfection makes it impossible for them to fasten their attachment upon themselves, and hence the humility of men of true genius: in, perhaps, the first man they meet, they only see what is good; they have no sense of his deficiencies, and their friendship becomes so strong, that they almost fall down and worship one in every respect greatly their inferior.

What is true of friendship is true of love, with a person of ardent feelings and warm imagination. What took place in the mind of Romeo was merely natural; it is accordant with every day's experience. Amid such various events, such shifting scenes, such changing personages, we are often mistaken, and discover that he or she was not what we hoped and expected: we find that the individual first chosen will not complete our imperfection; we may have suffered unnecessary pangs, and have indulged idly-directed hopes, and then a being may arise before us, who has more resemblance to the ideal we have formed. We know that we loved the earlier object with ardour and purity, but it was not what we feel for the later object. Our own mind tells us, that in the first instance we merely yearned after an object, but in the last instance we know that we have found that object, and that it corresponds with the idea we had previously formed.[1]

[1] "Here my original notes abruptly break off: the brochure in which I had inserted them was full, and I took another for the conclusion of the Lecture, which is unfortunately lost."—J. P. C.

Report of the latter portion of the Eighth Lecture.

The conclusion of the Eighth Lecture, as reported in the *Morning Chronicle* of December 13, 1811, is as follows:

"The origin and cause of love was a consciousness of imperfection, and an unceasing desire to remedy it; it was a yearning after an ideal image necessary to complete the happiness of man, by supplying what in him was deficient, and Shakspere throughout his works had viewed the passion in this dignified light; he had conceived it not only with moral grandeur, but with philosophical penetration. Romeo had formed his ideal; he imagined that Rosaline supplied the deficiency; but the moment he beheld Juliet he discovered his mistake; he felt a nearer affinity to her, he became perfectly enamoured, and the love he felt formed the foundation of the tragedy. The feeling of Romeo towards Juliet was wholly different, as he himself expressed it, from that he had experienced towards Rosaline.

The Lecturer went on to notice the analogy between the operations of the mind with regard to taste and love, as with the former an ideal had been created which the reason was anxious to realize. Other passions distort whatever object is presented to them. Lear accused the elements of ingratitude, and the madman imagined the straws on which he trampled the golden pavement of a palace; but, with love, everything was in harmony, and all produced natural and delightful associations. In Mr. Coleridge's opinion the conceits put into the mouths of Romeo and Juliet were perfectly natural to their age and inexperience. It was Shakspere's intention in this play to represent love as existing rather in the imagination, than in the feelings, as was shown by the imaginative dialogue between the hero and heroine in the parting scene in the third act. The passion of the youthful Romeo was wholly different from that of the deliberate Othello, who entered the marriage state with

deep moral reflections on its objects and consequences. The Lecturer insisted that love was an act of the will, and ridiculed the sickly nonsense of Sterne and his imitators, French and English, who maintained that it was an involuntary emotion. Having adverted to the trueness to nature of the tragic parts of *Romeo and Juliet*, Mr. Coleridge concluded by referring to Shakspere's description of the Apothecary, too often quoted against those of unfortunate physiognomy, or those depressed by poverty. Shakspere meant much more; he intended to convey that in every man's face there was either to be found a history or a prophecy; a history of struggles past, or a prophecy of events to come. In contemplating the face of the most abandoned of mankind, many lineaments of villany would be seen; yet in the under features (if he might so express himself) would be traced the lines that former sufferings and struggles had impressed, which would always sadden, and frequently soften the observer, and raise a determination in him not to despair, but to regard the unfortunate object with the feelings of a brother."

LECTURE IX.

IT is a known but unexplained phenomenon, that among the ancients statuary rose to such a degree of perfection, as almost to baffle the hope of imitating it, and to render the chance of excelling it absolutely impossible; yet painting, at the same period, notwithstanding the admiration bestowed upon it by Pliny and others, has been proved to be an art of much later growth, as it was also of far inferior quality. I remember a man of high rank, equally admirable for his talents and his taste, pointing to a common sign-post, and saying that had Titian never lived, the richness of representation by colour, even there, would never have been attained. In that mechanical branch of painting, perspective, it has been shown that the Romans were very deficient. The excavations and consequent discoveries, at Herculaneum and elsewhere, prove the Roman artists to have been guilty of such blunders, as to give plausibility to the assertions of those who maintain that the ancients were wholly ignorant of perspective. However, that they knew something of it is established by Vitruvius in the introduction to his second book.

Something of the same kind, as I endeavoured to explain in a previous lecture, was the case with the drama of the ancients, which has been imitated by the French, Italians, and by various writers in England since the Restoration. All that is there represented seems to be, as it were, upon one flat surface: the theme, if we may so call it in reference

to music, admits of nothing more than the change of a single note, and excludes that which is the true principle of life—the attaining of the same result by an infinite variety of means.

The plays of Shakspere are in no respect imitations of the Greeks: they may be called analogies, because by very different means they arrive at the same end; whereas the French and Italian tragedies I have read, and the English ones on the same model, are mere copies, though they cannot be called likenesses, seeking the same effect by adopting the same means, but under most inappropriate and adverse circumstances.

I have thus been led to consider, that the ancient drama (meaning the works of Æschylus, Euripides, and Sophocles, for the rhetorical productions of the same class by the Romans are scarcely to be treated as original theatrical poems) might be contrasted with the Shaksperian drama.—I call it the Shaksperian drama to distinguish it, because I know of no other writer who has realized the same idea, although I am told by some, that the Spanish poets, Lopez de Vega and Calderon, have been equally successful. The Shaksperian drama and the Greek drama may be compared to statuary and painting. In statuary, as in the Greek drama, the characters must be few, because the very essence of statuary is a high degree of abstraction, which prevents a great many figures being combined in the same effect. In a grand group of Niobe, or in any other ancient heroic subject, how disgusting even it would appear, if an old nurse were introduced. Not only the number of figures must be circumscribed, but nothing undignified must be placed in company with what is dignified: no one personage must be brought in that is not an abstraction: all the actors in the scene must not be presented at once to the eye; and the effect of multitude, if required, must be produced without the intermingling of anything discordant.

Compare this small group with a picture by Raphael or Titian, in which an immense number of figures may be introduced, a beggar, a cripple, a dog, or a cat; and by a less degree of labour, and a less degree of abstraction, an effect is produced equally harmonious to the mind, more true to nature with its varied colours, and, in all respects but one, superior to statuary. The man of taste feels satisfied, and to that which the reason conceives possible, a momentary reality is given by the aid of imagination.

I need not here repeat what I have said before, regarding the circumstances which permitted Shakspere to make an alteration, not merely so suitable to the age in which he lived, but, in fact, so necessitated by the condition of that age. I need not again remind you of the difference I pointed out between imitation and likeness, in reference to the attempt to give reality to representations on the stage. The distinction between imitation and likeness depends upon the admixture of circumstances of dissimilarity; an imitation is not a copy, precisely as likeness is not sameness, in that sense of the word "likeness" which implies difference conjoined with sameness. Shakspere reflected manners in his plays, not by a cold formal copy, but by an imitation; that is to say, by an admixture of circumstances, not absolutely true in themselves, but true to the character and to the time represented.

It is fair to own that he had many advantages. The great of that day, instead of surrounding themselves by the *chevaux de frise* of what is now called high breeding, endeavoured to distinguish themselves by attainments, by energy of thought, and consequent powers of mind. The stage, indeed, had nothing but curtains for its scenes, but this fact compelled the actor, as well as the author, to appeal to the imaginations, and not to the senses of the audience: thus was obtained a power over space and time, which in an ancient theatre would have been absurd, be-

cause it would have been contradictory. The advantage is vastly in favour of our own early stage: the dramatic poet there relies upon the imagination, upon the reason, and upon the noblest powers of the human heart; he shakes off the iron bondage of space and time; he appeals to that which we most wish to be, when we are most worthy of being, while the ancient dramatist binds us down to the meanest part of our nature, and the chief compensation is a simple acquiescence of the mind in the position, that what is represented might possibly have occurred in the time and place required by the unities. It is a poor compliment to a poet to tell him, that he has only the qualifications of a historian.

In dramatic composition the observation of the unities of time and place so narrows the period of action, so impoverishes the sources of pleasure, that of all the Athenian dramas there is scarcely one in which the absurdity is not glaring, of aiming at an object, and utterly failing in the attainment of it: events are sometimes brought into a space in which it is impossible for them to have occurred, and in this way the grandest effort of the dramatist, that of making his play the mirror of life, is entirely defeated.

The limit allowed by the rules of the Greek stage was twenty-four hours; but, inasmuch as, even in this case, time must have become a subject of imagination, it was just as reasonable to allow twenty-four months, or even years. The mind is acted upon by such strong stimulants, that the period is indifferent; and when once the boundary of possibility is passed, no restriction can be assigned. In reading Shakspere, we should first consider in which of his plays he means to appeal to the reason, and in which to the imagination, faculties which have no relation to time or place, excepting as in the one case they are governed by the laws of cause and effect, and in the other

picture, so that the impulse given by the reason is carried on by the imagination.

We have often heard Shakspere spoken of as a child of nature, and some of his modern imitators, without the genius to copy nature, by resorting to real incidents, and treating them in a certain way, have produced that stage-phenomenon which is neither tragic nor comic, nor tragi-comic, nor comi-tragic, but sentimental. This sort of writing depends upon some very affecting circumstances, and in its greatest excellence aspires no higher than the genius of an onion,—the power of drawing tears; while the author, acting the part of a ventriloquist, distributes his own insipidity among the characters, if characters they can be called, which have no marked and distinguishing features. I have seen dramas of this sort, some translated and some the growth of our own soil, so well acted, and so ill written, that if I could have been made for the time artificially deaf, I should have been pleased with that performance as a pantomime, which was intolerable as a play.

Shakspere's characters, from Othello and Macbeth down to Dogberry and the Grave-digger, may be termed ideal realities. They are not the things themselves, so much as abstracts of the things, which a great mind takes into itself, and there naturalizes them to its own conception. Take Dogberry: are no important truths there conveyed, no admirable lessons taught, and no valuable allusions made to reigning follies, which the poet saw must for ever reign? He is not the creature of the day, to disappear with the day, but the representative and abstract of truth which must ever be true, and of humour which must ever be

[illegible]s of Shakspere may be divided into two

[illegible]d his works with feeling and under-

2. Those who, without affecting to criticize, merely feel, and may be said to be the recipients of the poet's power.

Between the two no medium can be endured. The ordinary reader, who does not pretend to bring his understanding to bear upon the subject, often feels that some real trait of his own has been caught, that some nerve has been touched; and he knows that it has been touched by the vibration he experiences—a thrill, which tells us that, by becoming better acquainted with the poet, we have become better acquainted with ourselves.

In the plays of Shakspere every man sees himself, without knowing that he does so: as in some of the phenomena of nature, in the mist of the mountain, the traveller beholds his own figure, but the glory round the head distinguishes it from a mere vulgar copy. In traversing the Brocken, in the north of Germany, at sunrise, the brilliant beams are shot askance, and you see before you a being of gigantic proportions, and of such elevated dignity, that you only know it to be yourself by similarity of action. In the same way, near Messina, natural forms, at determined distances, are represented on an invisible mist, not as they really exist, but dressed in all the prismatic colours of the imagination. So in Shakspere: every form is true, everything has reality for its foundation; we can all recognize the truth, but we see it decorated with such hues of beauty, and magnified to such proportions of grandeur, that, while we know the figure, we know also how much it has been refined and exalted by the poet.

It is humiliating to reflect that, as it were, because heaven has given us the greatest poet, it has inflicted upon that poet the most incompetent critics: none of them seem to understand even his language, much less the principles upon which he wrote, and the peculiarities which distinguish him from all rivals. I will not now dwell upon

this point, because it is my intention to devote a lecture more immediately to the prefaces of Pope and Johnson. Some of Shakspere's contemporaries appear to have understood him, and imitated him in a way that does the original no small honour; but modern preface-writers and commentators, while they praise him as a great genius, when they come to publish notes upon his plays, treat him like a schoolboy; as if this great genius did not understand himself, was not aware of his own powers, and wrote without design or purpose. Nearly all they can do is to express the most vulgar of all feelings, wonderment—wondering at what they term the irregularity of his genius, sometimes above all praise, and at other times, if they are to be trusted, below all contempt. They endeavour to reconcile the two opinions by asserting that he wrote for the mob; as if a man of real genius ever wrote for the mob. Shakspere never consciously wrote what was below himself: careless he might be, and his better genius may not always have attended him; but I fearlessly say, that he never penned a line that he knew would degrade him. No man does anything equally well at all times; but because Shakspere could not always be the greatest of poets, was he therefore to condescend to make himself the least?[1]

Yesterday afternoon a friend left a book for me by a German critic, of which I have only had time to read a small part; but what I did read I approved, and I should be disposed to applaud the work much more highly, were it not that in so doing I should, in a manner, applaud myself.

[1] "It is certain that my short-hand note in this place affords another instance of mishearing: it runs literally thus—'but because Shakspere could not always be the greatest of poets, was he therefore to condescend to make himself a beast?' For 'a beast,' we must read *the least*, the antithesis being between 'greatest' and 'least,' and not between 'poet' and 'beast.' Yet 'beast' may be reconciled with sense, as in *Macbeth*: 'Notes and Emend.' 420."—J. P. C.

The sentiments and opinions are coincident with those to which I gave utterance in my lectures at the Royal Institution.[1] It is not a little wonderful, that so many ages have elapsed since the time of Shakspere, and that it should remain for foreigners first to feel truly, and to appreciate justly, his mighty genius. The solution of this circumstance must be sought in the history of our nation: the English have become a busy commercial people, and they have unquestionably derived from this propensity many social and physical advantages: they have grown to be a mighty empire—one of the great nations of the world, whose moral superiority enables it to struggle successfully

[1] Compare with these remarks an extract from a letter written by Coleridge in February, 1818, to a gentleman who attended his lectures of that year:—

"... Sixteen or rather seventeen years ago, I delivered eighteen lectures on Shakspere at the Royal Institution; three-fourths of which appeared at that time startling paradoxes, although they have since been adopted even by men, who then made use of them as proofs of my flighty and paradoxical turn of mind; all tending to prove that Shakspere's judgment was, if possible, still more wonderful than his genius; or rather, that the contra-distinction itself between judgment and genius rested on an utterly false theory. This, and its proofs and grounds, have been—I should not have said adopted, but produced as their own legitimate children by some, and by others the merit of them attributed to a foreign writer, whose lectures were not given orally till two years after mine, rather than to their countryman: though I dare appeal to the most adequate judges, as Sir George Beaumont, the Bishop of Durham, Mr. Sotheby, and afterwards to Mr. Rogers and Lord Byron, whether there is one single principle in Schlegel's work (which is not an admitted drawback from its merits), that was not established and applied in detail by me."

Quoted by H. N. Coleridge, in his "Literary Remains" of S. T. Coleridge, with a reference to the "Canterbury Magazine," September, 1834. Coleridge again and again returns to this subject. See, particularly, a formal statement, with formal date, prefixed to his notes on "Hamlet," in "the Lectures and Notes of 1818;" also § 5 of the Introductory matter to the present course.

against him, who may be deemed the evil genius of our planet.[1]

On the other hand, the Germans, unable to distinguish themselves in action, have been driven to speculation: all their feelings have been forced back into the thinking and reasoning mind. To do, with them is impossible, but in determining what ought to be done, they perhaps exceed every people of the globe. Incapable of acting outwardly, they have acted internally: they first rationally recalled the ancient philosophy, and set their spirits to work with an energy of which England produces no parallel, since those truly heroic times, heroic in body and soul, the days of Elizabeth.

If all that has been written upon Shakspere by Englishmen were burned, in the want of candles, merely to enable us to read one half of what our dramatist produced, we should be great gainers. Providence has given England the greatest man that ever put on and put off mortality, and has thrown a sop to the envy of other nations, by inflicting upon his native country the most incompetent critics. I say nothing here of the state in which his text has come down to us, farther than that it is evidently very imperfect: in many places his sense has been perverted, in

[1] When this lecture was delivered, Napoleon was on the eve of his invasion of Russia.

The dislike of Coleridge for Napoleon was reciprocated. While Coleridge still lingered in Italy, in 1806, an order for his arrest arrived from Paris. The Pope himself sent him a passport, and hurried him away. He hastily sailed from Leghorn in an American vessel, and a French ship pursued them. The captain of the former was thoroughly frightened, and compelled Coleridge to throw all his manuscripts into the sea;—an irreparable loss, affording confirmation of the statement in the text, that Napoleon was "the evil genius of our planet."

Later, Napoleon made an attempt to bribe Coleridge, through the French Ambassador at the English Court. See Gillman's "Life of Coleridge."

others, if not entirely obscured, so blunderingly represented, as to afford us only a glimpse of what he meant, without the power of restoring his own expressions. But whether his dramas have been perfectly or imperfectly printed, it is quite clear that modern inquiry and speculative ingenuity in this kingdom have done nothing; or I might say, without a solecism, less than nothing (for some editors have multiplied corruptions) to retrieve the genuine language of the poet. His critics, among us, during the whole of the last century, have neither understood nor appreciated him: for how could they appreciate what they could not understand?

His contemporaries, and those who immediately followed him, were not so insensible of his merits, or so incapable of explaining them; and one of them, who might be Milton when a young man of four and twenty, printed, in the second folio of Shakspeare's works, a laudatory poem, which, in its kind, has no equal for justness and distinctness of description, in references to the powers and qualities of lofty genius. It runs thus, and I hope that, when I have finished, I shall stand in need of no excuse for reading the whole of it.

"A mind reflecting ages past, whose clear
And equal surface can make things appear,
Distant a thousand years, and represent
Them in their lively colours, just extent:
To outrun hasty time, retrieve the fates,
Roll back the heavens, blow ope the iron gates
Of death and Lethe, where confused lie
Great heaps of ruinous mortality:
In that deep dusky dungeon to discern
A royal ghost from churls; by art to learn
The physiognomy of shades, and give
Them sudden birth, wondering how oft they live;
What story coldly tells, what poets feign
At second hand, and picture without brain,
Senseless and soul-less shows: to give a stage
(Ample and true with life) voice, action, age,

As Plato's year, and new scene of the world,
Them unto us, or us to them had hurl'd:
To raise our ancient sovereigns from their herse,
Make kings his subjects; by exchanging verse,
Enlive their pale trunks; that the present age
Joys at their joy, and trembles at their rage:
Yet so to temper passion, that our ears
Take pleasure in their pain, and eyes in tears
Both weep and smile; fearful at plots so sad,
Then laughing at our fear; abus'd, and glad
To be abus'd; affected with that truth
Which we perceive is false, pleas'd in that ruth
At which we start, and, by elaborate play,
Tortur'd and tickl'd; by a crab-like way
Time past made pastime, and in ugly sort
Disgorging up his ravin for our sport:—
—While the plebeian imp, from lofty throne,
Creates and rules a world, and works upon
Mankind by secret engines; now to move
A chilling pity, then a rigorous love;
To strike up and stroke down, both joy and ire
To steer th' affections; and by heavenly fire
Mold us anew, stol'n from ourselves:—
This, and much more, which cannot be express'd
But by himself, his tongue, and his own breast,
Was Shakespeare's freehold; which his cunning brain
Improv'd by favour of the nine-fold train;
The buskin'd muse, the comick queen, the grand
And louder tone of Clio, nimble hand
And nimbler foot of the melodious pair,
The silver-voiced lady, the most fair
Calliope, whose speaking silence daunts,
And she whose praise the heavenly body chants;
These jointly woo'd him, envying one another;
(Obey'd by all as spouse, but lov'd as brother)
And wrought a curious robe, of sable grave,
Fresh green, and pleasant yellow, red most brave,
And constant blue, rich purple, guiltless white,
The lowly russet, and the scarlet bright;
Branch'd and embroider'd like the painted spring;
Each leaf match'd with a flower, and each string
Of golden wire, each line of silk: there run

Italian works, whose thread the sisters spun;
And these did sing, or seem to sing, the choice
Birds of a foreign note and various voice:
Here hangs a mossy rock; there plays a fair
But chiding fountain, purled: not the air,
Nor clouds, nor thunder, but were living drawn;
Not out of common tiffany or lawn,
But fine materials, which the Muses know,
And only know the countries where they grow.
Now, when they could no longer him enjoy,
In mortal garments pent,—death may destroy,
They say, his body; but his verse shall live,
And more than nature takes our hands shall give:
In a less volume, but more strongly bound,
Shakespeare shall breathe and speak; with laurel crown'd,
Which never fades; fed with ambrosian meat,
In a well-lined vesture, rich, and neat.
So with this robe they clothe him, bid him wear it;
For time shall never stain, nor envy tear it.'

This poem is subscribed J. M. S., meaning, as some have explained the initials, "John Milton, Student:" the internal evidence seems to me decisive[1] for there was, I think, no other man, of that particular day, capable of writing anything so characteristic of S[illegible]ere, so justly thought, and so happily expressed.

It is a mistake to say that any of Sh[illegible] characters strike us as portraits: they have the [illegible] reason perceiving, of judgment recording, and of imagination diffusing

[1] The startling fact that Coleridge sees "decisive" internal evidence in this poem, that it is Milton's, may lessen the regret of some that his lectures on Milton are missing. That "J. M. S." should stand for "John Milton, Student," may be satisfactory to those who hit upon the idea. The second folio appeared in 1632, the year that Milton left Cambridge for Horton, after taking his M.A. degree. He had already written his two poems on Hobson, and his "*Epitaph on the admirable dramatic poet, W. Shakespeare*," without name or initials, appeared in the second folio, along with the verses in the text. All these three poems, moreover, are in the same metre as the verses in the text, and can easily be compared with them.

over all a magic glory. While the poet registers what is past, he projects the future in a wonderful degree, and makes us feel, however slightly, and see, however dimly, that state of being in which there is neither past nor future, but all is permanent in the very energy of nature.

Although I have affirmed that all Shakspere's characters are ideal, and the result of his own meditation, yet a just separation may be made of those in which the ideal is most prominent—where it is put forward more intensely—where we are made more conscious of the ideal, though in truth they possess no more nor less ideality: and of those which, though equally idealized, the delusion upon the mind is of their being real. The characters in the various plays may be separated into those where the real is disguised in the ideal, and those where the ideal is concealed from us by the real. The difference is made by the different powers of mind employed by the poet in the representation.

At present I shall only speak of dramas where the ideal is predominant: and chiefly for this reason—that those plays have been attacked with the greatest violence. The objections to them are not the growth of our own country, but of France, the judgment of monkeys, by some wonderful phenomenon put into the mouths of people shaped like men. These [illegible]ces have informed us that Shakspere is a miraculous monster, in whom many heterogeneous components were thrown together, producing a discordant mass of genius—an irregular and ill-assorted structure of gigantic proportions.

Among the ideal plays, I will take "The Tempest," by way of example. Various others might be mentioned, but it is impossible to go through every drama, and what I remark on "The Tempest" will apply to all Shakspere's productions of the same class.

In this play Shakspere has especially appealed to the imagination, and he has constructed a plot well adapted to

the purpose. According to his scheme, he did not appeal to any sensuous impression (the word "sensuous" is authorized by Milton) of time and place, but to the imagination, and it is to be borne in mind, that of old, and as regards mere scenery, his works may be said to have been recited rather than acted—that is to say, description and narration supplied the place of visual exhibition: the audience was told to fancy that they saw what they only heard described; the painting was not in colours, but in words.

This is particularly to be noted in the first scene—a storm and its confusion on board the king's ship. The highest and the lowest characters are brought together, and with what excellence! Much of the genius of Shakspere is displayed in these happy combinations—the highest and the lowest, the gayest and the saddest; he is not droll in one scene and melancholy in another, but often both the one and the other in the same scene. Laughter is made to swell the tear of sorrow, and to throw, as it were, a poetic light upon it, while the tear mingles tenderness with the laughter. Shakspere has evinced the power, which above all other men he possessed, that of introducing the profoundest sentiments of wisdom, where they would be least expected, yet where they are most truly natural. One admirable secret of his art is, that separate speeches frequently do not appear to have been occasioned by those which preceded, and which are consequent upon each other, but to have arisen out of the peculiar character of the speaker.

Before I go further, I may take the opportunity of explaining what is meant by mechanic and organic regularity. In the former the copy must appear as if it had come out of the same mould with the original: in the latter there is a law which all the parts obey, conforming themselves to the outward symbols and manifestations of the essential

principle. If we look to the growth of trees, for instance, we shall observe that trees of the same kind vary considerably, according to the circumstances of soil, air, or position; yet we are able to decide at once whether they are oaks, elms, or poplars.

So with Shakspere's characters: he shows us the life and principle of each being with organic regularity. The Boatswain, in the first scene of "The Tempest," when the bonds of reverence are thrown off as a sense of danger impresses all, gives a loose to his feelings, and thus pours forth his vulgar mind to the old Counsellor:—

"Hence! What care these roarers for the name of King? To cabin: silence! trouble us not."

Gonzalo replies—"Good; yet remember whom thou hast aboard." To which the Boatswain answers—"None that I more love than myself. You are a counsellor: if you can command these elements to silence, and work the peace of the present, we will not hand a rope more; use your authority: if you cannot, give thanks that you have lived so long, and make yourself ready in your cabin for the mischance of the hour, if it so hap.—Cheerly, good hearts! —Out of our way, I say."

An ordinary dramatist would, after this speech, have represented Gonzalo as moralizing, or saying something connected with the Boatswain's language; for ordinary dramatists are not men of genius: they combine their ideas by association, or by logical affinity; but the vital writer, who makes men on the stage what they are in nature, in a moment transports himself into the very being of each personage, and, instead of cutting out artificial puppets, he brings before us the men themselves. Therefore, Gonzalo soliloquizes,—"I have great comfort from this fellow: methinks, he hath no drowning mark upon him; his complexion is perfect gallows. Stand fast, good fate, to his hanging! make the rope of his destiny our

cable, for our own doth little advantage. If he be not born to be hanged, our case is miserable."

In this part of the scene we see the true sailor with his contempt of danger, and the old counsellor with his high feeling, who, instead of condescending to notice the words just addressed to him, turns off, meditating with himself, and drawing some comfort to his own mind, by trifling with the ill expression of the boatswain's face, founding upon it a hope of safety.

Shakspere had pre-determined to make the plot of this play such as to involve a certain number of low characters, and at the beginning he pitched the note of the whole. The first scene was meant as a lively commencement of the story; the reader is prepared for something that is to be developed, and in the next scene he brings forward Prospero and Miranda. How is this done? By giving to his favourite character, Miranda, a sentence which at once expresses the violence and fury of the storm, such as it might appear to a witness on the land, and at the same time displays the tenderness of her feelings—the exquisite feelings of a female brought up in the desert, but with all the advantages of education, all that [illegible] be communicated by a wise and affectionate father. She possesses all the delicacy of innocence, yet with all the powers of her mind unweakened by the combats of life. Miranda exclaims:—

> "O! I have suffered
> With those that I saw suffer: a brave vessel,
> Who had, no doubt, some noble creatures[1] in her,
> Dash'd all to pieces."

The doubt here intimated could have occurred to no

[1] Read "creature." Miranda evidently came to this conclusion, because of the "bravery" or superior style of the vessel. Doubtless she had seen many others. The whole of Coleridge's criticism grows out of his own misreading of the text, and perishes with it.

mind but to that of Miranda, who had been bred up in the island with her father and a monster only: she did not know, as others do, what sort of creatures were in a ship; others never would have introduced it as a conjecture. This shows, that while Shakspere is displaying his vast excellence, he never fails to insert some touch or other, which is not merely characteristic of the particular person, but combines two things—the person, and the circumstances acting upon the person. She proceeds:—

> "O! the cry did knock
> Against my very heart. Poor souls! they perish'd.
> Had I been any god of power, I would
> Have sunk the sea within the earth, or e'er
> It should the good ship so have swallow'd, and
> The fraughting souls within her."

She still dwells upon that which was most wanting to the completeness of her nature—these fellow creatures from whom she appeared banished, with only one relict to keep them alive, not in her memory, but in her imagination.

Another proof of [redacted]nt judgment in the poet, for I am now principally a[redacted]ng to that point, is to be found in the preparation of the reader for what is to follow. Prospero is introduced, first in his magic robe, which, with the assistance of his daughter, he lays aside, and we then know him to be a being possessed of supernatural powers. He then instructs Miranda in the story of their arrival in the island, and this is conducted in such a manner, that the reader never conjectures the technical use the poet has made of the relation, by informing the auditor of what it is necessary for him to know.

The next step is the warning by Prospero, that he means, for particular purposes, to lull his daughter to sleep; and here he exhibits the earliest and mildest proof

of magical power. In ordinary and vulgar plays we should have had some person brought upon the stage, whom nobody knows or cares anything about, to let the audience into the secret. Prospero having cast a sleep upon his daughter, by that sleep stops the narrative at the very moment when it was necessary to break it off, in order to excite curiosity, and yet to give the memory and understanding sufficient to carry on the progress of the history uninterruptedly.

Here I cannot help noticing a fine touch of Shakspere's knowledge of human nature, and generally of the great laws of the human mind: I mean Miranda's infant remembrance. Prospero asks her—

> "Canst thou remember
> A time before we came unto this cell?
> I do not think thou canst, for then thou wast not
> Out three years old."

Miranda answers,

> "Certainly, sir, I can."

Prospero inquires,

> "By what? by any other house or person?
> Of any thing the image tell me, that
> Hath kept with thy remembrance."

To which Miranda returns,

> "'Tis far off;
> And rather like a dream than an assurance
> That my remembrance warrants. Had I not
> Four or five women once, that tended me?"
>
> *Act I., Scene 2.*

This is exquisite! In general, our remembrances of early life arise from vivid colours, especially if we have seen them in motion: for instance, persons when grown up will remember a bright green door, seen when they were quite young; but Miranda, who was somewhat older, recollected

four or five women who tended her. She might know men from her father, and her remembrance of the past might be worn out by the present object, but women she only knew by herself, by the contemplation of her own figure in the fountain, and she recalled to her mind what had been. It was not, that she had seen such and such grandees, or such and such peeresses, but she remembered to have seen something like the reflection of herself: it was not herself, and it brought back to her mind what she had seen most like herself.

In my opinion the picturesque power displayed by Shakspere, of all the poets that ever lived, is only equalled, if equalled, by Milton and Dante. The presence of genius is not shown in elaborating a picture: we have had many specimens of this sort of work in modern poems, where all is so dutchified, if I may use the word, by the most minute touches, that the reader naturally asks why words, and not painting, are used. I know a young lady of much taste, who observed, that in reading recent versified accounts of voyages and travels, she, by a sort of instinct, cast her eyes on the opposite page, for coloured prints of what was so patiently and punctually described.

The power of poetry is, by a single word perhaps, to instil that energy into the mind, which compels the imagination to produce the picture. Prospero tells Miranda,

> "One midnight,
> Fated to the purpose, did Antonio open
> The gates of Milan; and i' the dead of darkness,
> The ministers for the purpose hurried thence
> Me, and thy crying self."

Here, by introducing a single happy epithet, "crying," in the last line, a complete picture is presented to the mind, and in the production of such pictures the power of genius consists.

In reference to preparation, it will be observed that the

storm, and all that precedes the tale, as well as the tale itself, serve to develop completely the main character of the drama, as well as the design of Prospero. The manner in which the heroine is charmed asleep fits us for what follows, goes beyond our ordinary belief, and gradually leads us to the appearance and disclosure of a being of the most fanciful and delicate texture, like Prospero, preternaturally gifted.

In this way the entrance of Ariel, if not absolutely forethought by the reader, was foreshown by the writer: in addition, we may remark, that the moral feeling called forth by the sweet words of Miranda,

> "Alack, what trouble
> Was I then to you!"

in which she considered only the sufferings and sorrows of her father, puts the reader in a frame of mind to exert his imagination in favour of an object so innocent and interesting. The poet makes him wish that, if supernatural agency were to be employed, it should be used for a being so young and lovely. "The wish is father to the thought," and Ariel is introduced. Here, what is called poetic faith is required and created, and our common notions of philosophy give way before it: this feeling may be said to be much stronger than historic faith, since for the exercise of poetic faith the mind is previously prepared. I make this remark, though somewhat digressive, in order to lead to a future subject of these lectures—the poems of Milton. When adverting to those, I shall have to explain farther the distinction between the two.

Many Scriptural poems have been written with so much of Scripture in them, that what is not Scripture appears to be not true, and like mingling lies with the most sacred revelations. Now Milton, on the other hand, has taken for his subject that one point of Scripture of which we

have the mere fact recorded, and upon this he has most judiciously constructed his whole fable. So of Shakspere's "King Lear:" we have little historic evidence to guide or confine us, and the few facts handed down to us, and admirably employed by the poet, are sufficient, while we read, to put an end to all doubt as to the credibility of the story. It is idle to say that this or that incident is improbable, because history, as far as it goes, tells us that the fact was so and so. Four or five lines in the Bible include the whole that is said of Milton's story, and the Poet has called up that poetic faith, that conviction of the mind, which is necessary to make that seem true, which otherwise might have been deemed almost fabulous.

But to return to "The Tempest," and to the wondrous creation of Ariel. If a doubt could ever be entertained whether Shakspere was a great poet, acting upon laws arising out of his own nature, and not without law, as has sometimes been idly asserted, that doubt must be removed by the character of Ariel. The very first words uttered by this being introduce the spirit, not as an angel, above man; not a gnome, or a fiend, below man; but while the poet gives him the faculties and the advantages of reason, he divests him of all mortal character, not positively, it is true, but negatively. In air he lives, from air he derives his being, in air he acts; and all his colours and properties seem to have been obtained from the rainbow and the skies. There is nothing about Ariel that cannot be conceived to exist either at sun-rise or at sun-set: hence all that belongs to Ariel belongs to the delight the mind is capable of receiving from the most lovely external appearances. His answers to Prospero are directly to the question, and nothing beyond; or where he expatiates, which is not unfrequently, it is to himself and upon his own delights, or upon the unnatural situation in which he is placed, though under a kindly power and to good ends.

Shakspere has properly made Ariel's very first speech characteristic of him. After he has described the manner in which he had raised the storm and produced its harmless consequences, we find that Ariel is discontented—that he has been freed, it is true, from a cruel confinement, but still that he is bound to obey Prospero, and to execute any commands imposed upon him. We feel that such a state of bondage is almost unnatural to him, yet we see that it is delightful for him to be so employed.—It is as if we were to command one of the winds in a different direction to that which nature dictates, or one of the waves, now rising and now sinking, to recede before it bursts upon the shore: such is the feeling we experience, when we learn that a being like Ariel is commanded to fulfil any mortal behest.

When, however, Shakspere contrasts the treatment of Ariel by Prospero with that of Sycorax, we are sensible that the liberated spirit ought to be grateful, and Ariel does feel and acknowledge the obligation; he immediately assumes the airy being, with a mind so elastically correspondent, that when once a feeling has passed from it, not a trace is left behind.

Is there anything in nature from which Shakspere caught the idea of this delicate and delightful being, with such child-like simplicity, yet with such preternatural powers? He is neither born of heaven, nor of earth; but, as it were, between both, like a May-blossom kept suspended in air by the fanning breeze, which prevents it from falling to the ground, and only finally, and by compulsion, touching earth. This reluctance of the Sylph to be under the command even of Prospero is kept up through the whole play, and in the exercise of his admirable judgment Shakspere has availed himself of it, in order to give Ariel an interest in the event, looking forward to that moment when he was to gain his last and only reward—simple and eternal liberty.

Another instance of admirable judgment and excellent preparation is to be found in the creature contrasted with Ariel—Caliban; who is described in such a manner by Prospero, as to lead us to expect the appearance of a foul, unnatural monster. He is not seen at once: his voice is heard; this is the preparation: he was too offensive to be seen first in all his deformity, and in nature we do not receive so much disgust from sound as from sight. After we have heard Caliban's voice he does not enter, until Ariel has entered like a water-nymph. All the strength of contrast is thus acquired without any of the shock of abruptness, or of that unpleasant sensation, which we experience when the object presented is in any way hateful to our vision.

The character of Caliban is wonderfully conceived: he is a sort of creature of the earth, as Ariel is a sort of creature of the air. He partakes of the qualities of the brute, but is distinguished from brutes in two ways:—by having mere understanding without moral reason; and by not possessing the instincts which pertain to absolute animals. Still, Caliban is in some respects a noble being: the poet has raised him far above contempt: he is a man in the sense of the imagination: all the images he uses are drawn from nature, and are highly poetical; they fit in with the images of Ariel. Caliban gives us images from the earth, Ariel images from the air. Caliban talks of the difficulty of finding fresh water, of the situation of morasses, and of other circumstances which even brute instinct, without reason, could comprehend. No mean figure is employed, no mean passion displayed, beyond animal passion, and repugnance to command.

The manner in which the lovers are introduced is equally wonderful, and it is the last point I shall now mention in reference to this, almost miraculous, drama. The same judgment is observable in every scene, still preparing, still

inviting, and still gratifying, like a finished piece of music. I have omitted to notice one thing, and you must give me leave to advert to it before I proceed: I mean the conspiracy against the life of Alonzo. I want to show you how well the poet prepares the feelings of the reader for this plot, which was to execute the most detestable of all crimes, and which, in another play, Shakspere has called the murder of sleep.

Antonio and Sebastian at first had no such intention: it was suggested by the magical sleep cast on Alonzo and Gonzalo; but they are previously introduced scoffing and scorning at what was said by others, without regard to age or situation—without any sense of admiration for the excellent truths they heard delivered, but giving themselves up entirely to the malignant and unsocial feeling, which induced them to listen to everything that was said, not for the sake of profiting by the learning and experience of others, but of hearing something that might gratify vanity and self-love, by making them believe that the person speaking was inferior to themselves.

This, let me remark, is one of the grand characteristics of a villain; and it would not be so much a presentiment, as an anticipation of hell, for men to suppose that all mankind were as wicked as themselves, or might be so, if they were not too great fools. Pope, you are perhaps aware, objected to this conspiracy; but in my mind, if it could be omitted, the play would lose a charm which nothing could supply.

Many, indeed innumerable, beautiful passages might be quoted from this play, independently of the astonishing scheme of its construction. Everybody will call to mind the grandeur of the language of Prospero in that divine speech, where he takes leave of his magic art; and were I to indulge myself by repetitions of the kind, I should descend from the character of a lecturer to that of a mere

reciter. Before I terminate, I may particularly recall one short passage, which has fallen under the very severe, but inconsiderate, censure of Pope and Arbuthnot, who pronounce it a piece of the grossest bombast. Prospero thus addresses his daughter, directing her attention to Ferdinand:

> "The fringed curtains of thine eye advance,
> And say what thou seest yond."
>
> *Act. I., Scene 2.*

Taking these words as a periphrase of—"Look what is coming yonder," it certainly may to some appear to border on the ridiculous, and to fall under the rule I formerly laid down,—that whatever, without injury, can be translated into a foreign language in simple terms, ought to be in simple terms in the original language; but it is to be borne in mind, that different modes of expression frequently arise from difference of situation and education: a blackguard would use very different words, to express the same thing, to those a gentleman would employ, yet both would be natural and proper; difference of feeling gives rise to difference of language: a gentleman speaks in polished terms, with due regard to his own rank and position, while a blackguard, a person little better than half a brute, speaks like half a brute, showing no respect for himself, nor for others.

But I am content to try the lines I have just quoted by the introduction to them; and then, I think, you will admit, that nothing could be more fit and appropriate than such language. How does Prospero introduce them? He has just told Miranda a wonderful story, which deeply affected her, and filled her with surprise and astonishment, and for his own purposes he afterwards lulls her to sleep. When she awakes, Shakspere has made her wholly inattentive to the present, but wrapped up in the past. An actress, who understands the character of Miranda, would have her eyes

cast down, and her eyelids almost covering them, while she was, as it were, living in her dream. At this moment Prospero sees Ferdinand, and wishes to point him out to his daughter, not only with great, but with scenic solemnity, he standing before her, and before the spectator, in the dignified character of a great magician. Something was to appear to Miranda on the sudden, and as unexpectedly as if the hero of a drama were to be on the stage at the instant when the curtain is elevated. It is under such circumstances that Prospero says, in a tone calculated at once to arouse his daughter's attention,

> "The fringed curtains of thine eye advance,
> And say what thou seest yond."

Turning from the sight of Ferdinand to his thoughtful daughter, his attention was first struck by the downcast appearance of her eyes and eyelids; and, in my humble opinion, the solemnity of the phraseology assigned to Prospero is completely in character, recollecting his preternatural capacity, in which the most familiar objects in nature present themselves in a mysterious point of view. It is much easier to find fault with a writer by reference to former notions and experience, than to sit down and read him, recollecting his purpose, connecting one feeling with another, and judging of his words and phrases, in proportion as they convey the sentiments of the persons represented.

Of Miranda we may say, that she possesses in herself all the ideal beauties that could be imagined by the greatest poet of any age or country; but it is not my purpose now, so much to point out the high poetic powers of Shakspere, as to illustrate his exquisite judgment, and it is solely with this design that I have noticed a passage with which, it seems to me, some critics, and those among the best, have been unreasonably dissatisfied. If Shakspere be the wonder

of the ignorant, he is, and ought to be, much more the wonder of the learned: not only from profundity of thought, but from his astonishing and intuitive knowledge of what man must be at all times, and under all circumstances, he is rather to be looked upon as a prophet than as a poet. Yet, with all these unbounded powers, with all this might and majesty of genius, he makes us feel as if he were unconscious of himself, and of his high destiny, disguising the half god in the simplicity of a child.

LECTURE XII.

IN the last lecture I endeavoured to point out in Shakspere those characters in which pride of intellect, without moral feeling, is supposed to be the ruling impulse, such as Iago, Richard III., and even Falstaff. In Richard III., ambition is, as it were, the channel in which this impulse directs itself; the character is drawn with the greatest fulness and perfection; and the poet has not only given us that character, grown up and completed, but he has shown us its very source and generation. The inferiority of his person made the hero seek consolation and compensation in the superiority of his intellect; he thus endeavoured to counterbalance his deficiency. This striking feature is portrayed most admirably by Shakspere, who represents Richard bringing forward his very defects and deformities as matters of boast. It was the same pride of intellect, or the assumption of it, that made John Wilkes vaunt that, although he was so ugly, he only wanted, with any lady, ten minutes' start of the handsomest man in England. This certainly was a high compliment to himself; but a higher to the female sex, on the supposition that Wilkes possessed this superiority of intellect, and relied upon it for making a favourable impression, because ladies would know how to estimate his advantages.

I will now proceed to offer some remarks upon the tragedy of "Richard II.", on account of its not very apparent, but still intimate, connection with "Richard III."

As, in the last, Shakspere has painted a man where ambition is the channel in which the ruling impulse runs, so, in the first, he has given us a character, under the name of Bolingbroke, or Henry IV., where ambition itself, conjoined unquestionably with great talents, is the ruling impulse. In Richard III. the pride of intellect makes use of ambition as its means; in Bolingbroke the gratification of ambition is the end, and talents are the means.

One main object of these lectures is to point out the superiority of Shakspere to other dramatists, and no superiority can be more striking, than that this wonderful poet could take two characters, which at first sight seem so much alike, and yet, when carefully and minutely examined, are so totally distinct.

The popularity of "Richard II." is owing, in a great measure, to the masterly delineation of the principal character; but were there no other ground for admiring it, it would deserve the highest applause, from the fact that it contains the most magnificent, and, at the same time, the truest eulogium of our native country that the English language can boast, or which can be produced from any other tongue, not excepting the proud claims of Greece and Rome. When I feel, that upon the morality of Britain depends the safety of Britain, and that her morality is supported and illustrated by our national feeling, I cannot read these grand lines without joy and triumph. Let it be remembered, that while this country is proudly pre-eminent in morals, her enemy has only maintained his station by superiority in mechanical appliances. Many of those who hear me will, no doubt, anticipate the passage I refer to, and it runs as follows:—

> "This royal throne of kings, this scepter'd isle,
> This earth of majesty, this seat of Mars,
> This other Eden, demi-paradise;
> This fortress, built by nature for herself

Against infection and the hand of war';
This happy breed of men, this little world;
This precious stone set in the silver sea,
Which serves it in the office of a wall,
Or as a moat defensive to a house,
Against the envy of less happier lands;
This blessed plot, this earth, this realm, this England,
This nurse, this teeming womb of royal kings,
Feared by their breed, and famous by their birth,
Renowned for their deeds as far from home,
For Christian service and true chivalry,
As is the Sepulchre in stubborn Jewry
Of the world's ransom, blessed Mary's son:
This land of such dear souls, this dear, dear land,
Dear for her reputation through the world,
Is now leas'd out, I die pronouncing it,
Like to a tenement, or pelting farm.
England, bound in with the triumphant sea,
Whose rocky shore beats back the envious siege
Of watery Neptune, is now bound in with shame,
With inky blots, and rotten parchment bonds."

Act II., Scene 1.

Every motive to patriotism, every cause producing it, is here collected, without one of those cold abstractions so frequently substituted by modern poets. If this passage were recited in a theatre with due energy and understanding, with a proper knowledge of the words, and a fit expression of their meaning, every man would retire from it secure in his country's freedom, if secure in his own constant virtue.

The principal personages in this tragedy are Richard II., Bolingbroke, and York. I will speak of the last first, although it is the least important; but the keeping of all is most admirable. York is a man of no strong powers of mind, but of earnest wishes to do right, contented in himself alone, if he have acted well: he points out to Richard the effects of his thoughtless extravagance, and the dangers by which he is encompassed, but having done so, he is

satisfied; there is no after action on his part; he does nothing; he remains passive. When old Gaunt is dying, York takes care to give his own opinion to the King, and that done he retires, as it were, into himself.

It has been stated, from the first, that one of my purposes in these lectures is, to meet and refute popular objections to particular points in the works of our great dramatic poet; and I cannot help observing here upon the beauty, and true force of nature, with which conceits, as they are called, and sometimes even puns, are introduced. What has been the reigning fault of an age must, at one time or another, have referred to something beautiful in the human mind; and, however conceits may have been misapplied, however they may have been disadvantageously multiplied, we should recollect that there never was an abuse of anything, but it previously has had its use. Gaunt, on his death-bed, sends for the young King, and Richard, entering, insolently and unfeelingly says to him:

> "What, comfort, man! how is't with aged Gaunt?"
>
> *Act II., Scene* 1.

and Gaunt replies:

> "O, how that name befits my composition!
> Old Gaunt, indeed; and gaunt in being old:
> Within me grief hath kept a tedious fast,
> And who abstains from meat, that is not gaunt?
> For sleeping England long time have I watched;
> Watching breeds leanness, leanness is all gaunt:
> The pleasure that some fathers feed upon
> Is my strict fast, I mean my children's looks;
> And therein fasting, thou hast made me gaunt,
> Gaunt am I for the grave, gaunt as a grave,
> Whose hollow womb inherits nought but bones."

Richard inquires,

> "Can sick men play so nicely with their names?"

To which Gaunt answers, giving the true justification of conceits:

> "No; misery makes sport to mock itself:
> Since thou dost seek to kill my name in me,
> I mock my name, great king, to flatter thee."

He that knows the state of the human mind in deep passion must know, that it approaches to that condition of madness, which is not absolute frenzy or delirium, but which models all things to one reigning idea; still it strays from the main subject of complaint, and still it returns to it, by a sort of irresistible impulse. Abruptness of thought, under such circumstances, is true to nature, and no man was more sensible of it than Shakspere. In a modern poem a mad mother thus complains:

> "The breeze I see is in yon tree:
> It comes to cool my babe and me."[1]

This is an instance of the abruptness of thought, so natural to the excitement and agony of grief; and if it be admired in images, can we say that it is unnatural in words, which are, as it were, a part of our life, of our very existence? In the Scriptures themselves these plays upon words are to be found, as well as in the best works of the ancients, and in the most delightful parts of Shakspere; and because this additional grace, not well understood, has in some instances been converted into a deformity—because it has been forced into places, where it is evidently improper and unnatural, are we therefore to include the whole application of it in one general condemnation? When it seems objectionable, when it excites a feeling contrary to the situation, when it perhaps disgusts, it is our business to inquire whether the conceit has been rightly or wrongly used—whether it is in a right or in a wrong place?

[1] From Wordsworth's poem, "Her Eyes are Wild."

In order to decide this point, it is obviously necessary to consider the state of mind, and the degree of passion, of the person using this play upon words. Resort to this grace may, in some cases, deserve censure, not because it is a play upon words, but because it is a play upon words in a wrong place, and at a wrong time. What is right in one state of mind is wrong in another, and much more depends upon that, than upon the conceit (so to call it) itself. I feel the importance of these remarks strongly, because the greater part of the abuse, I might say filth, thrown out and heaped upon Shakspere, has originated in want of consideration. Dr. Johnson asserts that Shakspere loses the world for a toy, and can no more withstand a pun, or a play upon words, than his Antony could resist Cleopatra. Certain it is, that Shakspere gained more admiration in his day, and long afterwards, by the use of speech in this way, than modern writers have acquired by the abandonment of the practice: the latter, in adhering to, what they have been pleased to call, the rules of art, have sacrificed nature.

Having said thus much on the, often falsely supposed, blemishes of our poet—blemishes which are said to prevail in "Richard II" especially,—I will now advert to the character of the King. He is represented as a man not deficient in immediate courage, which displays itself at his assassination; or in powers of mind, as appears by the foresight he exhibits throughout the play: still, he is weak, variable, and womanish, and possesses feelings, which, amiable in a female, are misplaced in a man, and altogether unfit for a king. In prosperity he is insolent and presumptuous, and in adversity, if we are to believe Dr. Johnson, he is humane and pious. I cannot admit the latter epithet, because I perceive the utmost consistency of character in Richard: what he was at first, he is at last, excepting as far as he yields to circumstances: what he showed himself at the commencement of the play, he shows himself at the

end of it. Dr. Johnson assigns to him rather the virtue of a confessor than that of a king.

True it is, that he may be said to be overwhelmed by the earliest misfortune that befalls him; but, so far from his feelings or disposition being changed or subdued, the very first glimpse of the returning sunshine of hope reanimates his spirits, and exalts him to as strange and unbecoming a degree of elevation, as he was before sunk in mental depression: the mention of those in his misfortunes, who had contributed to his downfall, but who had before been his nearest friends and favourites, calls forth from him expressions of the bitterest hatred and revenge. Thus, where Richard asks:

> "Where is the Earl of Wiltshire? Where is Bagot?
> What is become of Bushy? Where is Green?
> That they have let the dangerous enemy
> Measure our confines with such peaceful steps?
> If we prevail, their heads shall pay for it.
> I warrant they have made peace with Bolingbroke."
>
> *Act III., Scene 2.*

Scroop answers:

> "Peace have they made with him, indeed, my lord."

Upon which Richard, without hearing more, breaks out:

> "O villains! vipers, damn'd without redemption!
> Dogs, easily won to fawn on any man!
> Snakes, in my heart-blood warm'd, that sting my heart!
> Three Judases, each one thrice worse than Judas!
> Would they make peace? terrible hell make war
> Upon their spotted souls for this offence!"

Scroop observes upon this change, and tells the King how they had made their peace

> "Sweet love, I see, changing his property,
> Turns to the sourest and most deadly hate.

> Again uncurse their souls: their peace is made
> With heads and not with hands: those whom you curse
> Have felt the worst of death's destroying wound,
> And lie full low, grav'd in the hollow ground."

Richard receiving at first an equivocal answer,—"Peace have they made with him, indeed, my lord,"—takes it in the worst sense: his promptness to suspect those who had been his friends turns his love to hate, and calls forth the most tremendous execrations.

From the beginning to the end of the play he pours out all the peculiarities and powers of his mind: he catches at new hope, and seeks new friends, is disappointed, despairs, and at length makes a merit of his resignation. He scatters himself into a multitude of images, and in conclusion endeavours to shelter himself from that which is aronnd him by a cloud of his own thoughts. Throughout his whole career may be noticed the most rapid transitions—from the highest insolence to the lowest humility—from hope to despair, from the extravagance of love to the agonies of resentment, and from pretended resignation to the bitterest reproaches. The whole is joined with the utmost richness and copiousness of thought, and were there an actor capable of representing Richard, the part would delight us more than any other of Shakspere's masterpieces,—with, perhaps, the single exception of King Lear. I know of no character drawn by our great poet with such unequalled skill as that of Richard II.

Next we come to Henry Bolingbroke, the rival of Richard II. He appears as a man of dauntless courage, and of ambition equal to that of Richard III.; but, as I have stated, the difference between the two is most admirably conceived and preserved. In Richard III. all that surrounds him is only dear as it feeds his inward sense of superiority: he is no vulgar tyrant—no Nero or Caligula: he has always an end in view, and vast fertility of means to

accomplish that end. On the other hand, in Bolingbroke we find a man who in the outset has been sorely injured: then, we see him encouraged by the grievances of his country, and by the strange mismanagement of the government, yet at the same time scarcely daring to look at his own views, or to acknowledge them as designs. He comes home under the pretence of claiming his dukedom, and he professes that to be his object almost to the last; but, at the last, he avows his purpose to its full extent, of which he was himself unconscious in the earlier stages.

This is proved by so many passages, that I will only select one of them; and I take it the rather, because out of the many octavo volumes of text and notes, the page on which it occurs is, I believe, the only one left naked by the commentators. It is where Bolingbroke approaches the castle in which the unfortunate King has taken shelter: York is in Bolingbroke's company—the same York who is still contented with speaking the truth, but doing nothing for the sake of the truth,—drawing back after he has spoken, and becoming merely passive when he ought to display activity. Northumberland says,

> "The news is very fair and good, my lord
> Richard not far from hence hath hid his head."
>
> *Act III., Scene* 3.

York rebukes him thus:

> "It would beseem the Lord Northumberland
> To say King Richard:—Alack, the heavy day,
> When such a sacred king should hide his head!"

Northumberland replies:

> "Your grace mistakes me:[1] only to be brief
> Left I his title out."

[1] Omit "me."

To which York rejoins:

> "The time hath been,
> Would you have been so brief with him, he would
> Have been so brief with you, to shorten you,
> For taking so the head, your whole head's length."

Bolingbroke observes,

> "Mistake not, uncle, farther than you should;"

And York answers, with a play upon the words "take" and "mistake:"

> "Take not, good cousin, farther than you should,
> Lest you mistake.[1] The heavens are o'er our heads."

Here, give me leave to remark in passing, that the play upon words is perfectly natural, and quite in character: the answer is in unison with the tone of passion, and seems connected with some phrase then in popular use. Bolingbroke tells York:

> "I know it, uncle, and oppose not myself
> Against their will."

Just afterwards, Bolingbroke thus addresses himself to Northumberland:

> "Noble lord,[2]
> Go to the rude ribs of that ancient castle;
> Through brazen trumpet send the breath of parle
> Into his ruin'd ears, and thus deliver."

Here, in the phrase "into his ruin'd ears," I have no doubt that Shakspere purposely used the personal pronoun,

[1] 1st Fol., 1623, and Globe Shak., read,
"Lest you mistake the . . .

[2] The 1st Fol. reads "lord" and "parle." The Globe Edn. has "lords" and "parley."

"his," to show, that although Bolingbroke was only speaking of the castle, his thoughts dwelt on the king. In Milton the pronoun, "her" is employed, in relation to "form," in a manner somewhat similar. Bolingbroke had an equivocation in his mind, and was thinking of the king, while speaking of the castle. He goes on to tell Northumberland what to say, beginning,

> "Henry Bolingbroke,"

which is almost the only instance in which a name forms the whole line; Shakspere meant it to convey Bolingbroke's opinion of his own importance:—

> "Henry Bolingbroke
> On both his knees doth kiss King Richard's hand,
> And sends allegiance and true faith of heart
> To his most royal person; hither come
> Even at his feet to lay my arms and power,
> Provided that, my banishment repealed,
> And lands restor'd again, be freely granted.
> If not, I'll use th' advantage of my power,
> And lay the summer's dust with showers of blood,
> Rain'd from the wounds of slaughter'd Englishmen."

At this point Bolingbroke seems to have been checked by the eye of York, and thus proceeds in consequence:

> "The which, how far off from the mind of Bolingbroke
> It is, such crimson tempest should bedrench
> The fresh green lap of fair King Richard's land,
> My stooping duty tenderly shall show."

He passes suddenly from insolence to humility, owing to the silent reproof he received from his uncle. This change of tone would not have taken place, had Bolingbroke been allowed to proceed according to the natural bent of his own mind, and the flow of the subject. Let me direct attention to the subsequent lines, for the same reason; they are part of the same speech:

"Let's march without the noise of threat'ning drum,
That from the [1] castle's tatter'd battlements
Our fair appointments may be well perused.
Methinks, King Richard and myself should meet
With no less terror than the elements
Of fire and water, when their thundering shock
At meeting tears the cloudy cheeks of heaven."

Having proceeded thus far with the exaggeration of his own importance, York again checks him, and Bolingbroke adds, in a very different strain,

"He be [2] the fire, I'll be the yielding water:
The rage be his, while [3] on the earth I rain
My waters; on the earth, and not on him."

I have thus adverted to the three great personages in this drama, Richard, Bolingbroke, and York; and of the whole play it may be asserted, that with the exception of some of the last scenes (though they have exquisite beauty), Shakspere seems to have risen to the summit of excellence in the delineation and preservation of character.

We will now pass to "Hamlet," in order to obviate some of the general prejudices against the author, in reference to the character of the hero. Much has been objected to which ought to have been praised, and many beauties of the highest kind have been neglected, because they are somewhat hidden.

The first question we should ask ourselves is—What did Shakspere mean when he drew the character of Hamlet? He never wrote anything without design, and what was his design when he sat down to produce this tragedy? My belief is, that he always regarded his story, before he began to write, much in the same light as a painter regards his

[1] Read "this." [2] Read "Be he."
[3] So, 1st Fol. The Globe Edn. has "whilst."

canvas, before he begins to paint—as a mere vehicle for his thoughts—as the ground upon which he was to work. What then was the point to which Shakspere directed himself in Hamlet? He intended to portray a person, in whose view the external world, and all its incidents and objects, were comparatively dim, and of no interest in themselves, and which began to interest only, when they were reflected in the mirror of his mind. Hamlet beheld external things in the same way that a man of vivid imagination, who shuts his eyes, sees what has previously made an impression on his organs.

The poet places him in the most stimulating circumstances that a human being can be placed in. He is the heir apparent of a throne; his father dies suspiciously; his mother excludes her son from his throne by marrying his uncle. This is not enough; but the Ghost of the murdered father is introduced, to assure the son that he was put to death by his own brother. What is the effect upon the son?—instant action and pursuit of revenge? No: endless reasoning and hesitating—constant urging and solicitation of the mind to act, and as constant an escape from action; ceaseless reproaches of himself for sloth and negligence, while the whole energy of his resolution evaporates in these reproaches. This, too, not from cowardice, for he is drawn as one of the bravest of his time—not from want of forethought or slowness of apprehension, for he sees through the very souls of all who surround him, but merely from that aversion to action, which prevails among such as have a world in themselves.

How admirable, too, is the judgment of the poet! Hamlet's own disordered fancy has not conjured up the spirit of his father; it has been seen by others; he is prepared by them to witness its re-appearance, and when he does see it, Hamlet is not brought forward as having long brooded on the subject. The moment before the

Ghost enters, Hamlet speaks of other matters: he mentions the coldness of the night, and, observes that he has not heard the clock strike, adding, in reference to the custom of drinking, that it is

> "More honour'd in the breach than the observance."
>
> *Act I., Scene 4.*

Owing to the tranquil state of his mind, he indulges in some moral reflections. Afterwards, the Ghost suddenly enters.

> "*Hor.* Look, my lord! it comes.
> *Ham.* Angels and ministers of grace defend us!"

The same thing occurs in "Macbeth:" in the dagger-scene, the moment before the hero sees it, he has his mind applied to some indifferent matters; "Go, tell thy mistress," &c. Thus, in both cases, the preternatural appearance has all the effect of abruptness, and the reader is totally divested of the notion, that the figure is a vision of a highly wrought imagination.

Here Shakspere adapts himself so admirably to the situation—in other words, so puts himself into it—that though poetry, his language is the very language of nature. No terms, associated with such feelings, can occur to us so proper as those which he has employed, especially on the highest, the most august, and the most awful subjects that can interest a human being in this transient world. That this is no mere fancy, I can undertake to establish from hundreds, I might say thousands, of passages. No character he has drawn, in the whole list of his plays, could so well and fitly express himself, as in the language Shakspere has put into his mouth.

There is no indecision about Hamlet, as far as his own sense of duty is concerned; he knows well what he ought to do, and over and over again he makes up his mind to do it. The moment the players, and the two spies set upon

him, have withdrawn, of whom he takes leave with a line so expressive of his contempt,

"Ay so; good bye you.[1]—Now I am alone,"

he breaks out into a delirium of rage against himself for neglecting to perform the solemn duty he had undertaken, and contrasts the factitious and artificial display of feeling by the player with his own apparent indifference;

"What's Hecuba to him, or he to Hecuba,
That he should weep for her?"

Yet the player did weep for her, and was in an agony of grief at her sufferings, while Hamlet is unable to rouse himself to action, in order that he may perform the command of his father, who had come from the grave to incite him to revenge:—

"This is most brave!
That I, the son of a dear father murder'd,
Prompted to my revenge by heaven and hell,
Must, like a whore, unpack my heart with words,
And fall a cursing like a very drab,
A scullion." *Act II., Scene 2.*

It is the same feeling, the same conviction of what is his duty, that makes Hamlet exclaim in a subsequent part of the tragedy:

"How all occasions do inform against me,
And spur my dull revenge! What is a man,
If his chief good, and market of his time,
Be but to sleep and feed? A beast, no more.
——— I do not know
Why yet I live to say—'this thing's to do,'
Sith I have cause and will and strength and means
To do't." *Act IV., Scene 4.*

Yet with all this strong conviction of duty, and with all this resolution arising out of strong conviction, nothing is

[1] 1st Fol., "God buy' ye"; Globe Shak. "God be wi' ye."

done. This admirable and consistent character, deeply acquainted with his own feelings, painting them with such wonderful power and accuracy, and firmly persuaded that a moment ought not to be lost in executing the solemn charge committed to him, still yields to the same retiring from reality, which is the result of having, what we express by the terms, a world within himself.

Such a mind as Hamlet's is near akin to madness. Dryden has somewhere said,[1]

"Great wit to madness nearly is allied,"

and he was right; for he means by "wit" that greatness of genius, which led Hamlet to a perfect knowledge of his own character, which, with all strength of motive, was so weak as to be unable to carry into act his own most obvious duty.

With all this he has a sense of imperfectness, which becomes apparent when he is moralizing on the skull in the churchyard. Something is wanting to his completeness—something is deficient which remains to be supplied, and he is therefore described as attached to Ophelia. His madness is assumed, when he finds that witnesses have been placed behind the arras to listen to what passes, and when the heroine has been thrown in his way as a decoy.

Another objection has been taken by Dr. Johnson, and Shakspere has been taxed very severely. I refer to the scene where Hamlet enters and finds his uncle praying, and refuses to take his life, excepting when he is in the height of his iniquity. To assail him at such a moment of confession and repentance, Hamlet declares,

"Why,[2] this is hire and salary, not revenge."

Act III., Scene 3.

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[1] "Great wits are sure to madness near allied,
And thin partitions do their bounds divide."
Absalom and Achitophel, 163-4.

[2] Read "O."

He therefore forbears, and postpones his uncle's death, until he can catch him in some act

"That has no relish of salvation in't."

This conduct, and this sentiment, Dr. Johnson has pronounced to be so atrocious and horrible, as to be unfit to be put into the mouth of a human being.[1] The fact, however, is that Dr. Johnson did not understand the character of Hamlet, and censured accordingly: the determination to allow the guilty King to escape at such a moment is only part of the indecision and irresoluteness of the hero. Hamlet seizes hold of a pretext for not acting, when he might have acted so instantly and effectually: therefore, he again defers the revenge he was bound to seek, and declares his determination to accomplish it at some time,

"When he is drunk, asleep, or in his rage,
Or in th' incestuous pleasures of his bed."

This, allow me to impress upon you most emphatically, was merely the excuse Hamlet made to himself for not taking advantage of this particular and favourable moment for doing justice upon his guilty uncle, at the urgent instance of the spirit of his father.

Dr. Johnson farther states, that in the voyage to England, Shakspere merely follows the novel as he found it, as if the poet had no other reason for adhering to his original; but Shakspere never followed a novel, because he found such and such an incident in it, but because he saw that the story, as he read it, contributed to enforce, or to explain some great truth inherent in human nature. He never could lack invention to alter or improve a popular narrative; but he did not wantonly vary from it, when he knew that, as it was related, it would so well apply to his

[1] See Malone's Shakspere by Boswell, vii. 382, for Johnson's note upon this part of the scene.—J. P. C.

own great purpose. He saw at once how consistent it was with the character of Hamlet, that after still resolving, and still deferring, still determining to execute, and still postponing execution, he should finally, in the infirmity of his disposition, give himself up to his destiny, and hopelessly place himself in the power, and at the mercy of his enemies.

Even after the scene with Osrick, we see Hamlet still indulging in reflection, and hardly thinking of the task he has just undertaken: he is all despatch and resolution, as far as words and present intentions are concerned, but all hesitation and irresolution, when called upon to carry his words and intentions into effect; so that, resolving to do everything, he does nothing. He is full of purpose, but void of that quality of mind which accomplishes purpose.

Anything finer than this conception, and working out of a great character, is merely impossible. Shakspere wished to impress upon us the truth, that action is the chief end of existence—that no faculties of intellect, however brilliant, can be considered valuable, or indeed otherwise than as misfortunes, if they withdraw us from, or render us repugnant to action, and lead us to think and think of doing, until the time has elapsed when we can do anything effectually. In enforcing this moral truth, Shakspere has shown the fulness and force of his powers: all that is amiable and excellent in nature is combined in Hamlet, with the exception of one quality. He is a man living in meditation, called upon to act by every motive human and divine, but the great object of his life is defeated by continually resolving to do, yet doing nothing but resolve.

Note on the Subjects of the Remaining Lectures.

The Twelfth Lecture, as advertised in the *Times*, was to be on "Shakspere and Milton;" but Milton does not appear

in Mr. Collier's transcript. We learn from the same Journal that Lecture Thirteen (which covered eventually two evenings) was to be on the same subject, with "strictures on the commentators of Shakspere, and especially on Dr. Johnson's Preface;" that Lecture Fourteen was to be a continuation of "the review of Dr. Johnson's Preface;" the fifteenth to be "the commencement of a series of lectures on Milton;" the sixteenth to conclude "the Lectures on Milton," and the seventeenth was to be "the last lecture in illustration of the principles of poetry," and to consist of "strictures on the modern English poets." It would seem that, towards the end, at least, promise and performance varied, and that Milton was all but passed over.

See Appendix. Also compare the allusions to these later lectures in the extracts from H. C. Robinson's Diary, which are given above.

II.

LECTURES AND NOTES OF 1818.

LECTURES AND NOTES OF 1818.

INTRODUCTORY.

§ 1. *Two Letters and a Prospectus.*

MR. COLLIER, in his Preface to the Lectures of 1811-12, supplies two letters, from Wordsworth and Lamb, which he received near the end of 1817.

"*Wednesday.*[1]

"MY DEAR SIR,

"Coleridge, to whom all but certain reviewers wish well, intends to try the effect of another course of Lectures in London on Poetry generally, and on Shakspere's Poetry particularly. He gained some money and reputation by his last effort of the kind, which was, indeed, to him no effort, since his thoughts as well as his words flow spontaneously. He talks as a bird sings, as if he could not help it: it is his nature. He is now far from well in body or spirits: the former is suffering from various causes, and the latter from depression. No man ever deserved to have fewer enemies, yet, as he thinks and says, no man has more, or more virulent. You have long been among his friends; and as far as you can go, you will no doubt prove it on this as on other occasions. We are all anxious on his account. He means to call upon you himself, or write from Highgate, where he now is.

"Yours sincerely,

"W. WORDSWORTH."

[1] "Near the end of 1817."—J. P. C.

"*The Garden of England*, 10*th Decr.*[1]

"DEAR J. P. C.

"I know how zealously you feel for our friend S. T. Coleridge, and I know that you and your family attended his Lectures four or five years ago. He is in bad health, and worse mind, and unless something is done to lighten his heart, he will soon be reduced to his extremities; and even these are not in the best condition. I am sure that you will do for him what you can, but at present he seems in a mood to do for himself. He projects a new course, not of physic, nor of metaphysic, nor a new course of life; but a new course of lectures on Shakspere and Poetry. There is no man better qualified (always excepting number one) but I am pre-engaged for a series of dissertations on India and India-pendence, to be completed at the expense of the Company, in I know not (yet) how many vols. foolscap folio. I am busy getting up my Hindu mythology, and for the purpose I am once more enduring Southey's curse (of Kehama). To be serious, Coleridge's state and affairs make me so; and there are particular reasons just now (and have been any time for the last twenty years) why he should succeed. He will do so, with a little encouragement. I have not seen him lately, and he does not know that I am writing.

"Yours (for Coleridge's sake) in haste,

"C. LAMB."

These letters were probably called forth by the following Prospectus,[2] which was issued, as Gillman tells us, in the autumn of 1817.

"There are few families, at present, in the higher and middle classes of English society, in which literary topics and the productions of the Fine Arts, in some one or other of their various forms, do not occasionally take their turn in contributing to the entertainment of the social board, and the amusement of the circle at the fire-side. The acquisitions and attainments of the

[1] "Doubtless written, as Wordsworth's letter, in 1817." Lamb now lived at the corner of Bow Street and Russell Street, and "The Garden of England" was Covent Garden.

[2] Printed in Gillman's "Life," and previously in vol. i. of the "Remains."

intellect ought, indeed, to hold a very inferior rank in our estimation, opposed to moral worth, or even to professional and specific skill, prudence, and industry. But why should they be *opposed*, when they may be made subservient merely by being *subordinated?* It can rarely happen that a man of social disposition, altogether a stranger to subjects of taste (almost the only ones on which persons of both sexes can converse with a common interest), should pass through the world without at times feeling dissatisfied with himself. The best proof of this is to be found in the marked anxiety which men, who have succeeded in life without the aid of these accomplishments, show in securing them to their children. A young man of ingenuous mind will not wilfully deprive himself of any species of respect. He will wish to feel himself on a level with the average of the society in which he lives, though he may be ambitious of *distinguishing* himself only in his own immediate pursuit or occupation.

"Under this conviction, the following Course of Lectures was planned. The several titles will best explain the particular subjects and purposes of each; but the main objects proposed, as the result of all, are the two following:—

"I. To convey, in a form best fitted to render them impressive at the time, and remembered afterwards, rules and principles of sound judgment, with a kind and degree of connected information, such as the hearers, generally speaking, cannot be supposed likely to form, collect, and arrange for themselves, by their own unassisted studies. It might be presumption to say, that any important part of these Lectures could not be derived from books; but none, I trust, in supposing, that the same information could not be so surely or conveniently acquired from such books as are of commonest occurrence, or with that quantity of time and attention which can be reasonably expected, or even wisely desired, of men engaged in business and the active duties of the world.

"II. Under a strong persuasion that little of real value is derived by persons in general from a wide and various reading; but still more deeply convinced as to the actual *mischief* of unconnected and promiscuous reading, and that it is sure, in a greater or less degree, to enervate even where it does not likewise inflate; I hope to satisfy many an ingenuous mind, seriously interested in its own development and cultivation, how moderate a number of volumes, if only they be judiciously chosen, will suffice for the

attainment of every wise and desirable purpose: that is, *in addition* to those which he studies for specific and professional purposes. It is saying less than the truth to affirm, that an excellent book (and the remark holds almost equally good of a Raphael as of a Milton) is like a well-chosen and well-tended fruit-tree. Its fruits are not of one season only. With the due and natural intervals, we may recur to it year after year, and it will supply the same nourishment and the same gratification, if only we ourselves return with the same healthful appetite.

"The subjects of the Lectures are indeed very *different*, but not (in the strict sense of the term) *diverse*: they are *various*, rather than *miscellaneous*. There is this bond of connection common to them all,—that the mental pleasure which they are calculated to excite is not dependent on accidents of fashion, place or age, or the events or the customs of the day; but commensurate with the good sense, taste, and feeling, to the cultivation of which they themselves so largely contribute, as being all in *kind*, though not all in the same *degree*, productions of GENIUS.

"What it would be arrogant to promise, I may yet be permitted to hope,—that the execution will prove correspondent and adequate to the plan. Assuredly my best efforts have not been wanting so to select and prepare the materials, that, at the conclusion of the Lectures, an attentive auditor, who should consent to aid his future recollection by a few notes taken either during each Lecture or soon after, would rarely feel himself, for the time to come, excluded from taking an intelligent interest in any general conversation likely to occur in mixed society.

"S. T. COLERIDGE."

Syllabus of the Course.

"LECTURE I. *Tuesday Evening, January* 27, 1818.—On the manners, morals, literature, philosophy, religion, and the state of society in general, in European Christendom, from the eighth to the fifteenth century (that is, from A.D. 700 to A.D. 1400), more particularly in reference to England, France, Italy, and Germany: in other words, a portrait of the (so called) dark ages of Europe.

"II. On the tales and metrical romances common, for the most part, to England, Germany, and the North of France; and on

the English songs and ballads; continued to the reign of Charles the First.—A few selections will be made from the Swedish, Danish, and German languages, translated for the purpose by the Lecturer.

"III. Chaucer and Spenser; of Petrarch; of Ariosto, Pulci, and Boiardo.

"IV. V. and VI. On the Dramatic Works of SHAKSPERE. In these Lectures will be comprised the substance of Mr. Coleridge's former Courses on the same subject, enlarged and varied by subsequent study and reflection.

"VII. On Ben Jonson, Beaumont and Fletcher, and Massinger; with the probable causes of the cessation of Dramatic *Poetry* in England with Shirley and Otway, soon after the Restoration of Charles the Second.

"VIII. Of the Life and *all* the Works of CERVANTES, but chiefly of his Don Quixote. The Ridicule of Knight-Errantry shewn to have been but a secondary object in the mind of the Author, and not the principal Cause of the Delight which the Work continues to give in all Nations, and under all the Revolutions of Manners and Opinions.

"IX. On Rabelais, Swift, and Sterne: on the Nature and Constituents of genuine Humour, and on the Distinctions of the Humorous from the Witty, the Fanciful, the Droll, the Odd, &c.

"X. Of Donne, Dante, and Milton.

"XI. On the Arabian Nights Entertainments, and on the *romantic* use of the supernatural in Poetry, and in works of fiction not poetical. On the conditions and regulations under which such Books may be employed advantageously in the earlier Periods of Education.

"XII. On tales of witches, apparitions, &c. as distinguished from the magic and magicians of Asiatic origin. The probable sources of the former, and of the belief in them in certain ages and classes of men. Criteria by which mistaken and exaggerated facts may be distinguished from absolute falsehood and imposture. Lastly, the causes of the terror and interest which stories of ghosts and witches inspire, in early life at least, whether believed or not.

"XIII. On colour, sound, and form, in nature, as connected with POESY: the word 'Poesy' used as the *generic* or class term, including poetry, music, painting, statuary, and ideal architecture, as its species. The reciprocal relations of poetry

and philosophy to each other; and of both to religion, and the moral sense.

"XIV. On the corruptions of the English language since the reign of Queen Anne, in our style of writing prose. A few easy rules for the attainment of a manly, unaffected, and pure language, in our genuine mother-tongue, whether for the purposes of writing, oratory, or conversation. Concluding Address."

§ 2. *The Lectures of* 1818.

The series of lectures, of which the prospectus has been given in § 1, duly commenced on Jan. 27, 1818, and ended on March 13.

It will be observed that the fourth, fifth, and sixth lectures only are on Shakspere; but the seventh is on Ben Jonson, and other English Dramatists, chiefly as contrasted with Shakspere; and the tenth includes Milton, and probably contains the substance of the missing lectures of 1811-12.

Coleridge, looking back on these lectures, was wont to consider them the most satisfactory he had delivered; although the lecture-room, Gillman says, was in "an unfavourable situation," "near the Temple." They "were delivered," Allsop tell us, in his "Recollections," "in Flower de Luce Court,[1] and were constantly thronged by the most attentive and intelligent auditory I have ever seen."

Crabb Robinson was absent from London during a portion of this course. His few notes of it are meagre. Such as they are, we give them.

[1] A lecture on Romeo and Juliet, at the "Crown and Anchor," is alluded to by Coleridge in his letter to J. Britton. It could not have formed part of the course of 1818. The "Crown and Anchor" was in Arundel Street, Strand. It was a favourite place for lectures and meetings.

"*January* 27*th*, 1818.—I went to the Surrey Institution, where I heard Hazlitt lecture on Shakspere and Milton.

"From hence I called at Collier's, and taking Mrs. Collier with me, I went to a lecture by Coleridge in Fleur-de-lis Court,[1] Fleet Street. I was gratified unexpectedly by finding a large and respectable audience, generally of superior-looking persons, in physiognomy rather than dress. Coleridge treated of the origin of poetry and of Oriental works; but he had little animation, and an exceedingly bad cold rendered his voice scarcely audible.

"*February* 10*th*.—The conversation was beginning to be very interesting, when I was obliged to leave the party to attend Coleridge's lecture on Shakspere. Coleridge was apparently ill.

"*February* 20*th*.—I dined at Collier's, and went to Coleridge. Coleridge was not in one of his happiest moods to-night. His subject was Cervantes, but he was more than usually prosy, and his tone peculiarly drawling. His digressions on the nature of insanity were carried too far, and his remarks on the book but old, and by him often repeated.

"*February* 27*th*.—I took tea with Gurney, and invited Mrs. Gurney to accompany me to Coleridge's lecture. It was on Dante and Milton—one of his very best. He digressed less than usual, and really gave information and ideas about the poets he professed to criticize."

§. 3. *The Matter published in the "Remains."*

As we have pointed out in § 2, the lectures of 1818 treated of many things besides dramatists; but it is with these we are mainly concerned.

[1] Coleridge himself, and Allsop, write "Flower de Luce." The locality, in any case, must have been the "Fleur de Lis Court," at present to be found in Fetter Lane. (First passage to the right from Fleet Street.)

With this first note of Crabb Robinson's, compare Coleridge's letter to Allsop, of the 28th: "Your friendly letter was first delivered to me at the lecture-room door on yesterday evening, ten minutes before the lecture, and my spirits were so sadly depressed by the circumstance of my hoarseness, that I was literally incapable of reading it."

Gillman says, Coleridge "lectured from notes, which he had carefully made," and that "*many of* these notes were preserved, and have lately been printed in the 'Literary Remains.'" He alludes, of course, to H. N. Coleridge's "Literary Remains of S. T. Coleridge," 4 vols., 1836-39.

But it is difficult to make out what the matter really is, which H. N. Coleridge printed. It is "confusion worse confounded." If the original papers are still in existence, it would be well to search for any dates there may be on them.[1]

Let us see what we have in the "Remains."

The editor gives, in vol. i., what notes and the like he has on all the lectures of the course, and on the subjects of those lectures, except the three on Shakspere,—the fourth, fifth, and sixth. In the second volume he puts together, like beads on a string, a number of notes, and portions of lectures, written down before, or written down after delivery (hardly, in any case, reported), on poetry, Shakspere, and the drama. He heads them, "Shakspere, with introductory matter on Poetry, the Drama, and the Stage." One long note is professedly written by Mr. Justice Coleridge, the editor's brother. These, by-and-by, without any warning, become a series of notes on Ben Jonson, and on Beaumont and Fletcher; whereas, Coleridge's general remarks on these poets (though quite as much on Shakspere as on them) were left in the first volume (Lec. VII.).

Now, what *are* these fragments and notes? We will state our conclusion plainly, without circumlocution. They by no means merely belong to 1818. They are all the

[1] Such, for instance, as the two we find in the notes on "As You Like It," and those in Section II.

manuscript notes, and written portions of lectures, accumulated by Coleridge through years; often altered, often added to, from time to time; rearranged, and conned over anew, for each new course; some used now, some then; possibly, left in the order in which Coleridge arranged them for the lectures of 1818; possibly, altered, added to, rearranged, even later.[1] The earlier portion, on the drama and so on, could have been little used in that course, in which only three lectures were devoted to Shakspere. Accordingly, we find little trace of it in Mr. Carwardine's memoranda (see § 4). On the other hand, we see, from the same memoranda, that Coleridge treated of the plays in three divisions, handling the historical plays in the second; which would account for the editor's arrangement, or no arrangement, to which we shall allude presently.

[1] Coleridge, in a letter to Allsop, of Jan., 1821, speaking of a great work he had in contemplation (the opening sentence is, probably, a marvel of self-deception) writes:—

"I have already the *written* materials and contents, requiring only to be put together, from the loose papers and commonplace or memorandum books, and needing no other change, whether of omission, addition, or correction, than the mere act of arranging, and the opportunity of seeing the whole collectively, bring with them of course,—I. Characteristics of Shakspere's Dramatic Works, with a Critical Review of each Play; together with a relative and comparative Critique on the kind and degree of the Merits and Demerits of the Dramatic Works of Ben Jonson, Beaumont and Fletcher, and Massinger. The History of the English Drama; the accidental advantages it afforded to Shakspere, without in the least detracting from the perfect originality or proper creation of the Shaksperian Drama; the contradistinction of the latter from the Greek Drama, and its still remaining *uniqueness*, with the causes of this, from the combined influences of Shakspere himself, as man, poet, philosopher, and finally, by conjunction of all these, dramatic poet; and of the age, events, manners, and state of the English language. This work, with every art of compression, amounts to three volumes of about five hundred pages each."

In the letter to J. Britton, Coleridge explains how he occasionally wrote a lecture, or part of a lecture; how he made many notes; how, previous to lecturing, he studied "the mass of material" he had before him; and then lectured extempore. Thus is reconciled his statement in one place, that his lectures were always different, with that in others, that they were in substance the same. (See Introductory Matter to the Collier series, § 5.) The prospectus of 1818 itself announces, that lectures four, five, and six will comprise "the substance of Mr. Coleridge's former courses on the same subject, enlarged and varied by subsequent study and reflection."

Such being really the nature of the materials published in the "Remains," as it seems to us, it will hardly be a liberty, if we put into them a little arrangement. We will state clearly, to avoid misunderstanding, what we have ventured to do.

They have been divided into sections, with appropriate headings. The portion treating of the Historical Plays, which will be found, in the "Remains," between the notes on "Romeo and Juliet" and those on "Lear," has been allotted a separate section. The general remarks on Jonson and others, left by the editor in his first volume, have been inserted before the notes on those authors. That is all.

The criticisms on Chaucer, Spenser, and Milton, in vol. i. are included in our Appendix, for reasons there stated.

§ 4.—*Mr. H. H. Carwardine's Memoranda.*

We subjoin the memoranda of the course, so far as they refer to the Shakspere lectures, of Henry Holgate

Carwardine, Colne Priory, Essex, who was personally known to Coleridge. They were found among his papers, in 1867, and published in "Notes and Queries," April 2nd, 1870, whence we extract them.

"Coleridge, 6 Feb. 'On Shakspere.' His predecessors, the poets of Italy, France, and England, &c., drew their aliment from the soil; there was a nationality; they were of a country, of a genus, grafted with the chivalrous spirit and sentiment of the North, and with the wild magic imported from the East. He bore no direct witness of the soil from whence he grew; compare him with the mountain pine.

"Self-sustained, deriving his genius immediately from heaven, independent of all earthly or national influence. That such a mind involved itself in a human form is a problem indeed which my feeble powers may witness with admiration, but cannot explain. My words are indeed feeble when I speak of that myriad-minded man, whom all artists feel above all praise. Least of all poets, ancient or modern, does Shakspere appear to be coloured or affected by the age in which he lived—he was of all times and countries.

"He drew from the eternal of our nature.

"When misers were most common in his age, yet he has drawn no such character; and why? because it was mere transitory character. Shylock no miser, not the great feature of his character.

"In an age of political and religious heat, yet there is no sectarian character of politics or religion.

"In an age of superstition, when witchcraft was the passion of the monarch, yet he has never introduced such characters. For the weird sisters are as different as possible.

"Judgment and genius are as much one as the fount and the stream that flows from it; and I must dwell on the judgment of Shakspere.

"When astrological predictions had possession of the mind, he has no such character. It was a transient folly merely of the time, and therefore it did not belong to Shakspere; and in company with Homer and Milton and whatever is great on earth, he invented the Drama.

"The Greek tragedy was tragic opera differing only in this

that in Greek the scenery and music were subservient to the poetry. In modern opera the poetry is subservient to the music and decoration.

"A *mere* copy never delights us in anything. Why do we go to a tragedy to witness the representation of the woe which we may daily witness? The ancient tragedians confined their subjects to gods and heroes, and traditional people. Shakspere—a more difficult task—in drawing not only from nature, but from the times as well as things before him, and so true to nature that you never can conceive his characters could speak otherwise than they do in the situation in which they are placed.

"—— common expression—'How natural Shakspere is'—and yet so peculiar that if you read but a few detached lines you immediately say, 'this must be Shakspere.'

"Such peculiar propriety and excellence, and truth to nature, that there is nothing in any man at all like him—a research for that felicity of language current in the courts of Elizabeth and James, but so was Massinger, B. Jonson, Beaumont and Fletcher, &c., but yet they are not like Shakspere's language. Divide his works into three great classes; no division can be made that applies to tragedy and comedy, for nature acknowledges none of these distinct sharp lines, and Shakspere is the Poet of Nature, portraying things as they exist. He has, as it were, prophesied what each man in his different passions would have produced.

"1. His Comedies and Romantic Dramas.

"2. His Historical Plays.

"3. His Great Tragedies.

"There is a character of observation, a happiness of noticing whatever is external, and arranging them like a gallery of pictures, representing passions, which no man appropriates to himself, and yet acknowledges his share.

"Character of his mind, depth, and energy of thought. No man was ever a great poet without being a great philosopher. In his earliest poems the poet and philosopher are perpetually struggling with each other till they found a field where they were blended, and flowed in sweetest harmony and strength.

"*Love's Labour Lost*, I affirm, must have been the first of his plays—firstly, it has the least observation, and the characters are merely such as a young man of genius might have made out himself. But it has other marks; it is all intellect. There is little to interest as a dramatic representation, yet affording infinite

matter of beautiful quotation. ...ing and Biron, 'Light seeking light blinds us,' no instance in which the same thought so happily expressed. In the character of Biron he has the germ of Benedict and Mercutio; it was the first rough draft, which he afterwards finished with Ben. and Mer.

"In Holofernes is contained the sketch of Polonius. He never on any occasion spares pedantry—

'remunerative.
Nathaniel. I praise God for your sin,' &c.

"Much of this wordiness (here ridiculed) shown in modern poetry; words nicely balanced till you come to seek the meaning, when you are surprised to find none.

"His blank verse has nothing equal to it but that of Milton. Such fulness of thought gives an involution of metre so natural to the expression of passions, which fills and elevates the mind, and gives general truths in full, free, and poetic language.

"*Lear, Macbeth, &c.*

"Shakspere, the only one who has made passion the vehicle of general truth, as in his comedy he has made even folly itself the vehicle of philosophy. Each speech is what every man feels to be latent in his nature: what he would have said in that situation if he had had the ability and readiness to do it, and these are multiplied and individualized with the most extraordinary minuteness and truth.

"Of the exquisite judgment of the . . . . . must conceive a stage without scenery—acting a poor recitation. He frequently speaks to his audience. If, says he, you will listen to me with your minds and not with your eyes to . . . . . and assist me with your imaginations, I will do so and so.

"Characteristic of his comedy and romantic drama.

"1st. His characters never introduced for the sake of his plot, but his plot arises out of his characters, nor are all these involved in them. You meet people who meet and speak to you as in real life, interesting you differently, having some distinctive peculiarity which interests you, and thus the story is introduced which you appear casually made acquainted with, yet still you feel that it excites an interest—that there is something that is applicable to certain situations, &c.

"Again, his characters have something more than a mere amusing property.

"For example, in *The Tempest*, the delight of Trinculo at finding something more sottish than himself and that honours him—the characteristic of base and vulgar minds which Shakspere is fond of lashing and placing in a ridiculous light [read scene between Trinculo and Caliban]; but Shakspere can make even rude vulgarity the vehicle of profound truths and thoughts. Prospero, the mighty wizard, whose potent art could not only call up all the spirits of the deep, but the characters as they were and are and will be, seems a portrait of the bard himself. No magician or magic, in the proper sense of the word—a being to excite either fear or wonder—nothing in common with such characters as were brought from the East.

"If there be any imitation in Shakspere, of what is it imitation? What so earthly as Caliban, so aërial as Ariel, so fanciful, so exquisitely light, yet some striving of thought of an undeveloped power.

"I know no character in Shakspere to which he has given a propensity to sneer, or scoff, or express contempt, but he has made that man a villain."

SECTION I.

POETRY, THE DRAMA, AND SHAKSPERE.

Definition of Poetry.[1]

POETRY is not the proper antithesis to prose, but to science. Poetry is opposed to science, and prose to metre. The proper and immediate object of science is the acquirement, or communication, of truth; the proper and immediate object of poetry is the communication of immediate pleasure. This definition is useful; but as it would include novels and other works of fiction, which yet we do not call poems, there must be some additional character by which poetry is not only divided from opposites, but likewise distinguished from disparate, though similar, modes of composition. Now how is this to be effected? In animated prose, the beauties of nature, and the passions and accidents of human nature, are often expressed in that natural language which the contemplation of them would suggest to a pure and benevolent mind; yet still neither we nor the writers call such a work a poem, though no work could deserve that name which did not include all this, together with something else. What is this? It is that pleasurable

[1] See chap. xiv. of the *Biographia Literaria*, and the first lecture of the course of 1811-12.

emotion, that peculiar state and degree of excitement, which arises in the poet himself in the act of composition;—and in order to understand this, we must combine a more than ordinary sympathy with the objects, emotions, or incidents contemplated by the poet, consequent on a more than common sensibility, with a more than ordinary activity of the mind in respect of the fancy and the imagination. Hence is produced a more vivid reflection of the truths of nature and of the human heart, united with a constant activity modifying and correcting these truths by that sort of pleasurable emotion, which the exertion of all our faculties gives in a certain degree; but which can only be felt in perfection under the full play of those powers of mind, which are spontaneous rather than voluntary, and in which the effort required bears no proportion to the activity enjoyed. This is the state which permits the production of a highly pleasurable whole, of which each part shall also communicate for itself a distinct and conscious pleasure; and hence arises the definition, which I trust is now intelligible, that poetry, or rather a poem, is a species of composition, opposed to science, as having intellectual pleasure for its object, and as attaining its end by the use of language natural to us in a state of excitement,—but distinguished from other species of composition, not excluded by the former criterion, by permitting a pleasure from the whole consistent with a consciousness of pleasure from the component parts;—and the perfection of which is, to communicate from each part the greatest immediate pleasure compatible with the largest sum of pleasure on the whole. This, of course, will vary with the different modes of poetry;—and that splendour of particular lines, which would be worthy of admiration in an impassioned elegy, or a short indignant satire, would be a blemish and proof of vile taste in a tragedy or an epic poem.

It is remarkable, by the way, that Milton in three inci-

dental words has implied all which for the purposes of more distinct apprehension, which at first must be slow-paced in order to be distinct, I have endeavoured to develop in a precise and strictly adequate definition. Speaking of poetry, he says, as in a parenthesis, "which is simple, sensuous, passionate." How awful is the power of words! —fearful often in their consequences when merely felt, not understood; but most awful when both felt and understood!—Had these three words only been properly understood by, and present in the minds of, general readers, not only almost a library of false poetry would have been either precluded or still-born, but, what is of more consequence, works truly excellent and capable of enlarging the understanding, warming and purifying the heart, and placing in the centre of the whole being the germs of noble and manlike actions, would have been the common diet of the intellect instead. For the first condition, simplicity,—while, on the one hand, it distinguishes poetry from the arduous processes of science, labouring towards an end not yet arrived at, and supposes a smooth and finished road, on which the reader is to walk onward easily, with streams murmuring by his side, and trees and flowers and human dwellings to make his journey as delightful as the object of it is desirable, instead of having to toil with the pioneers and painfully make the road on which others are to travel,—precludes, on the other hand, every affectation and morbid peculiarity;—the second condition, sensuousness, insures that framework of objectivity, that definiteness and articulation of imagery, and that modification of the images themselves, without which poetry becomes flattened into mere didactics of practice, or evaporated into a hazy, unthoughtful, day-dreaming; and the third condition, passion, provides that neither thought nor imagery shall be simply objective, but that the *passio vera* of humanity shall warm and animate both.

To return, however, to the previous definition, this most general and distinctive character of a poem originates in the poetic genius itself; and though it comprises whatever can with any propriety be called a poem, (unless that word be a mere lazy synonyme for a composition in metre,) it yet becomes a just, and not merely discriminative, but full and adequate, definition of poetry in its highest and most peculiar sense, only so far as the distinction still results from the poetic genius, which sustains and modifies the emotions, thoughts, and vivid representations of the poem by the energy without effort of the poet's own mind,—by the spontaneous activity of his imagination and fancy, and by whatever else with these reveals itself in the balancing and reconciling of opposite or discordant qualities, sameness with difference, a sense of novelty and freshness with old or customary objects, a more than usual state of emotion with more than usual order, self-possession and judgment with enthusiasm and vehement feeling,—and which, while it blends and harmonizes the natural and the artificial, still subordinates art to nature, the manner to the matter, and our admiration of the poet to our sympathy with the images, passions, characters, and incidents of the poem:—

> "Doubtless, this could not be, but that she turns
> Bodies to *spirit* by sublimation strange,
> As fire converts to fire the things it burns
> As we our food into our nature change!
>
> "From their gross matter she abstracts *their* forms,
> And draws a kind of quintessence from things,
> Which to her proper nature she transforms,
> To bear them light on her celestial wings!
>
> "*Thus* doth she, when from *individual states*
> She doth abstract the universal kinds,
> *Which then reclothed in diverse names and fates*
> *Steal access thro' our senses to our minds.*"[1]

[1] Sir John Davies on the Immortality of the Soul, sect. iv. The

Greek Drama.

It is truly singular that Plato,—whose philosophy and religion were but exotic at home, and a mere opposition to the finite in all things, genuine prophet and anticipator as he was of the Protestant Christian æra,—should have given in his Dialogue of the Banquet a justification of our Shakspere. For he relates that, when all the other guests had either dispersed or fallen asleep, Socrates only, together with Aristophanes and Agathon, remained awake, and that, while he continued to drink with them out of a large goblet, he compelled them, though most reluctantly, to admit that it was the business of one and the same genius to excel in tragic and comic poetry, or that the tragic poet ought, at the same time, to contain within himself the powers of comedy. Now, as this was directly repugnant to the entire theory of the ancient critics, and contrary to all their experience, it is evident that Plato must have fixed the eye of his contemplation on the innermost essentials of the drama, abstracted from the forms of age or country. In another passage he even adds the reason, namely, that opposites illustrate each other's nature, and in their struggle draw forth the strength of the combatants, and display the conqueror as sovereign even on the territories of the rival power.

Nothing can more forcibly exemplify the separative spirit of the Greek arts than their comedy as opposed to their tragedy. But as the immediate struggle of contraries supposes an arena common to both, so both were alike ideal; that is, the comedy of Aristophanes rose to as great

words and lines in italics are substituted, to apply these verses to the poetic genius. The greater part of this latter paragraph may be found adopted, with some alterations, in the *Biographia Literaria*, chap. 14. —H. N. C.

a distance above the ludicrous of real life, as the tragedy of Sophocles above its tragic events and passions:—and it is in this one point, of absolute ideality, that the comedy of Shakspere and the old comedy of Athens coincide. In this also alone did the Greek tragedy and comedy unite; in everything else they were exactly opposed to each other. Tragedy is poetry in its deepest earnest: comedy is poetry in unlimited jest. Earnestness consists in the direction and convergence of all the powers of the soul to one aim, and in the voluntary restraint of its activity in consequence; the opposite, therefore, lies in the apparent abandonment of all definite aim or end, and in the removal of all bounds in the exercise of the mind,—attaining its real end, as an entire contrast, most perfectly, the greater the display is of intellectual wealth squandered in the wantonness of sport without an object, and the more abundant the life and vivacity in the creations of the arbitrary will.

The later comedy, even where it was really comic, was doubtless likewise more comic, the more free it appeared from any fixed aim. Misunderstandings of intention, fruitless struggles of absurd passion, contradictions of temper, and laughable situations there were; but still the form of the representation itself was serious; it proceeded as much according to settled laws, and used as much the same means of art, though to a different purpose, as the regular tragedy itself. But in the old comedy the very form itself is whimsical; the whole work is one great jest, comprehending a world of jests within it, among which each maintains its own place without seeming to concern itself as to the relation in which it may stand to its fellows. In short, in Sophocles, the constitution of tragedy is monarchical, but such as it existed in elder Greece, limited by laws, and therefore the more venerable,—all the parts adapting and submitting themselves to the majesty of the

heroic sceptre:—in Aristophanes, comedy, on the contrary, is poetry in its most democratic form, and it is a fundamental principle with it, rather to risk all the confusion of anarchy, than to destroy the independence and privileges of its individual constituents,—place, verse, characters, even single thoughts, conceits, and allusions, each turning on the pivot of its own free will.

The tragic poet idealizes his characters by giving to the spiritual part of our nature a more decided preponderance over the animal cravings and impulses than is met with in real life: the comic poet idealizes his characters by making the animal the governing power, and the intellectual the mere instrument. But as tragedy is not a collection of virtues and perfections, but takes care only that the vices and imperfections shall spring from the passions, errors, and prejudices which arise out of the soul;—so neither is comedy a mere crowd of vices and follies, but whatever qualities it represents, even though they are in a certain sense amiable, it still displays them as having their origin in some dependence on our lower nature, accompanied with a defect in true freedom of spirit and self-subsistence, and subject to that unconnection by contradictions of the inward being, to which all folly is owing.

The ideal of earnest poetry consists in the union and harmonious melting down, and fusion of the sensual into the spiritual,—of man as an animal into man as a power of reason and self-government. And this we have represented to us most clearly in the plastic art, or statuary: where the perfection of outward form is a symbol of the perfection of an inward idea; where the body is wholly penetrated by the soul, and spiritualized even to a state of glory, and like a transparent substance, the matter, in its own nature darkness, becomes altogether a vehicle and fixture of light, a means of developing its beauties, and unfolding its wealth of various colours without disturbing its unity, or causing

a division of the parts. The sportive ideal, on the contrary, consists in the perfect harmony and concord of the higher nature with the animal, as with its ruling principle and its acknowledged regent. The understanding and practical reason are represented as the willing slaves of the senses and appetites, and of the passions arising out of them. Hence we may admit the appropriateness to the old comedy, as a work of defined art, of allusions and descriptions, which morality can never justify, and, only with reference to the author himself, and only as being the effect or rather the cause of the circumstances in which he wrote, can consent even to palliate.

The old comedy rose to its perfection in Aristophanes, and in him also it died with the freedom of Greece. Then arose a species of drama, more fitly called dramatic entertainment than comedy, but of which, nevertheless, our modern comedy (Shakspere's altogether excepted) is the genuine descendant. Euripides had already brought tragedy lower down and by many steps nearer to the real world than his predecessors had ever done, and the passionate admiration which Menander and Philemon expressed for him, and their open avowals that he was their great master, entitle us to consider their dramas as of a middle species, between tragedy and comedy,—not the tragi-comedy, or thing of heterogeneous parts, but a complete whole, founded on principles of its own. Throughout we find the drama of Menander distinguishing itself from tragedy, but not, as the genuine old comedy, contrasting with, and opposing it. Tragedy, indeed, carried the thoughts into the mythologic world, in order to raise the emotions, the fears, and the hopes, which convince the inmost heart that their final cause is not to be discovered in the limits of mere mortal life, and force us into a presentiment, however dim, of a state in which those struggles of inward free will with outward necessity, which form the true subject of the

tragedian, shall be reconciled and solved;—the entertainment or new comedy, on the other hand, remained within the circle of experience. Instead of the tragic destiny, it introduced the power of chance: even in the few fragments of Menander and Philemon now remaining to us, we find many exclamations and reflections concerning chance and fortune, as in the tragic poets concerning destiny. In tragedy, the moral law, either as obeyed or violated, above all consequences—its own maintenance or violation constituting the most important of all consequences—forms the ground; the new comedy, and our modern comedy in general (Shakspere excepted as before) lies in prudence or imprudence, enlightened or misled self-love. The whole moral system of the entertainment exactly like that of fable, consists in rules of prudence, with an exquisite conciseness, and at the same time an exhaustive fulness of sense. An old critic said that tragedy was the flight or elevation of life, comedy (that of Menander) its arrangement or ordonnance.

Add to these features a portrait-like truth of character, not so far indeed as that a *bona fide* individual should be described or imagined, but yet so that the features which give interest and permanence to the class should be individualized. The old tragedy moved in an ideal world,—the old comedy in a fantastic world. As the entertainment, or new comedy, restrained the creative activity both of the fancy and the imagination, it indemnified the understanding in appealing to the judgment for the probability of the scenes represented. The ancients themselves acknowledged the new comedy as an exact copy of real life. The grammarian, Aristophanes, somewhat affectedly exclaimed:—"O Life and Menander! which of you two imitated the other?" In short, the form of this species of drama was poetry; the stuff or matter was prose. It was prose rendered delightful by the blandishments and measured motions of the muse. Yet even this was not universal.

The mimes of Sophron, so passionately admired by Plato, were written in prose, and were scenes out of real life conducted in dialogue. The exquisite Feast of Adonis (Συρακόσιαι ἢ Ἀδωνιάζουσαι) in Theocritus, we are told, with some others of his eclogues, were close imitations of certain mimes of Sophron—free translations of the prose into hexameters.

It will not be improper, in this place, to make a few remarks on the remarkable character and functions of the chorus in the Greek tragic drama.

The chorus entered from below, close by the orchestra, and there, pacing to and fro during the choral odes, performed their solemn measured dance. In the centre of the *orchestra*, directly over against the middle of the *scene*, there stood an elevation with steps in the shape of a large altar, as high as the boards of the *logeion* or moveable stage. This elevation was named the *thymele* (θυμελη), and served to recall the origin and original purpose of the chorus, as an altar-song in honour of the presiding deity. Here, and on these steps, the persons of the chorus sate collectively, when they were not singing; attending to the dialogue as spectators, and acting as (what in truth they were) the ideal representatives of the real audience, and of the poet himself in his own character, assuming the supposed impressions made by the drama, in order to direct and rule them. But when the chorus itself formed part of the dialogue, then the leader of the band, the foreman or *coryphæus*, ascended, as some think, the level summit of the *thymele* in order to command the stage, or, perhaps, the whole chorus advanced to the front of the orchestra, and thus put themselves in ideal connection, as it were, with the *dramatis personæ* there acting. This *thymele* was in the centre of the whole edifice; all the measurements were calculated, and the semi-circle of the amphitheatre was drawn, from this point. It had a double use, a twofold

purpose; it constantly reminded the spectators of the origin of tragedy as a religious service, and declared itself as the ideal representative of the audience by having its place exactly in the point, to which all the radii from the different seats or benches converged.

In this double character, as constituent parts, and yet at the same time as spectators, of the drama, the chorus could not but tend to enforce the unity of place;—not on the score of any supposed improbability, which the understanding or common sense might detect in a change of place;—but because the senses themselves put it out of the power of any imagination to conceive a place coming to, and going away from the persons, instead of the persons changing their place. Yet there are instances, in which, during the silence of the chorus, the poets have hazarded this by a change in that part of the scenery which represented the more distant objects to the eye of the spectator—a demonstrative proof, that this alternately extolled and ridiculed unity (as ignorantly ridiculed as extolled) was grounded on no essential principle of reason, but arose out of circumstances which the poet could not remove, and therefore took up into the form of the drama, and co-organized it with all the other parts into a living whole.

The Greek tragedy may rather be compared to our serious opera than to the tragedies of Shakspere; nevertheless, the difference is far greater than the likeness. In the opera all is subordinated to the music, the dresses, and the scenery;—the poetry is a mere vehicle for articulation, and as little pleasure is lost by ignorance of the Italian language, so is little gained by the knowledge of it. But in the Greek drama all was but as instruments and accessaries to the poetry; and hence we should form a better notion of the choral music from the solemn hymns and psalms of austere church music than from any species of theatrical singing. A single flute or pipe was the ordinary

accompaniment; and it is not to be supposed, that any display of musical power was allowed to obscure the distinct hearing of the words. On the contrary, the evident purpose was to render the words more audible, and to secure by the elevations and pauses greater facility of understanding the poetry. For the choral songs are, and ever must have been, the most difficult part of the tragedy; there occur in them the most involved verbal compounds, the newest expressions, the boldest images, the most recondite allusions. Is it credible that the poets would, one and all, have been thus prodigal of the stores of art and genius, if they had known that in the representation the whole must have been lost to the audience,—at a time too, when the means of after publication were so difficult, and expensive, and the copies of their works so slowly and narrowly circulated?

The masks also must be considered—their vast variety and admirable workmanship. Of this we retain proof by the marble masks which represented them; but to this in the real mask we must add the thinness of the substance and the exquisite fitting on to the head of the actor: so that not only were the very eyes painted with a single opening left for the pupil of the actor's eye, but in some instances, even the iris itself was painted, when the colour was a known characteristic of the divine or heroic personage represented.

Finally, I will note down those fundamental characteristics which contradistinguish the ancient literature from the modern generally, but which more especially appear in prominence in the tragic drama. The ancient was allied to statuary, the modern refers to painting. In the first there is a predominance of rhythm and melody, in the second of harmony and counterpoint. The Greeks idolized the finite, and therefore were the masters of all grace, elegance, proportion, fancy, dignity, majesty—of whatever,

in short, is capable of being definitely conveyed by defined forms or thoughts: the moderns revere the infinite, and affect the indefinite as a vehicle of the infinite;—hence their passions, their obscure hopes and fears, their wandering through the unknown, their grander moral feelings, their more august conception of man as man, their future rather than their past—in a word, their sublimity.

Progress of the Drama.

Let two persons join in the same scheme to ridicule a third, and either take advantage of, or invent, some story for that purpose, and mimicry will have already produced a sort of rude comedy. It becomes an inviting treat to the populace, and gains an additional zest and burlesque by following the already established plan of tragedy; and the first man of genius who seizes the idea, and reduces it into form,—into a work of art,—by metre and music, is the Aristophanes of the country.

How just this account is will appear from the fact that in the first or old comedy of the Athenians, most of the *dramatis personæ* were living characters introduced under their own names; and no doubt, their ordinary dress, manner, person and voice were closely mimicked. In less favourable states of society, as that of England in the middle ages, the beginnings of comedy would be constantly taking place from the mimics and satirical minstrels; but from want of fixed abode, popular government, and the successive attendance of the same auditors, it would still remain in embryo. I shall, perhaps, have occasion to observe that this remark is not without importance in explaining the essential differences of the modern and ancient theatres.

Phenomena, similar to those which accompanied the

origin of tragedy and comedy among the Greeks, would take place among the Romans much more slowly, and the drama would, in any case, have much longer remained in its first irregular form from the character of the people, their continual engagements in wars of conquest, the nature of their government, and their rapidly increasing empire. But, however this might have been, the conquest of Greece precluded both the process and the necessity of it: and the Roman stage at once presented imitations or translations of the Greek drama. This continued till the perfect establishment of Christianity. Some attempts, indeed, were made to adapt the persons of Scriptural or ecclesiastical history to the drama; and sacred plays, it is probable, were not unknown in Constantinople under the emperors of the East. The first of the kind is, I believe, the only one preserved,—namely, the Χριστὸς Πάσχων, or "Christ in His sufferings," by Gregory Nazianzen,—possibly written in consequence of the prohibition of profane literature to the Christians by the apostate Julian.[1] In the West, however, the enslaved and debauched Roman world became too barbarous for any theatrical exhibitions more refined than those of pageants and chariot-races; while the spirit of Christianity, which in its most corrupt form still breathed general humanity, whenever controversies of faith were not concerned, had done away the cruel combats of the gladiators, and the loss of the distant provinces prevented the possibility of exhibiting the engagements of wild beasts.

I pass, therefore, at once to the feudal ages which soon succeeded, confining my observation to this country; though, indeed, the same remark with very few alterations will apply to all the other states, into which the great empire

[1] A.D. 363. "But I believe the prevailing opinion amongst scholars now is, that the Χριστὸς Πάσχων is not genuine."—H. N. C.

was broken. Ages of darkness succeeded;—not, indeed, the darkness of Russia or of the barbarous lands unconquered by Rome; for from the time of Honorius to the destruction of Constantinople and the consequent introduction of ancient literature into Europe, there was a continued succession of individual intellects;—the golden chain was never wholly broken, though the connecting links were often of baser metal. A dark cloud, like another sky, covered the entire cope of heaven,—but in this place it thinned away, and white stains of light showed a half eclipsed star behind it,—in that place it was rent asunder, and a star passed across the opening in all its brightness, and then vanished. Such stars exhibited themselves only; surrounding objects did not partake of their light. There were deep wells of knowledge, but no fertilizing rills and rivulets. For the drama, society was altogether a state of chaos, out of which it was, for a while at least, to proceed anew, as if there had been none before it. And yet it is not undelightful to contemplate the eduction of good from evil. The ignorance of the great mass of our countrymen was the efficient cause of the reproduction of the drama; and the preceding darkness and the returning light were alike necessary in order to the creation of a Shakspere.

The drama recommenced in England, as it first began in Greece, in religion. The people were not able to read,—the priesthood were unwilling that they should read; and yet their own interest compelled them not to leave the people wholly ignorant of the great events of sacred history. They did that, therefore, by scenic representations, which in after ages it has been attempted to do in Roman Catholic countries by pictures. They presented Mysteries, and often at great expense: and reliques of this system still remain in the south of Europe, and indeed throughout Italy, where at Christmas the convents and the great nobles rival each other in the scenic representation of the birth

of Christ and its circumstances. I heard two instances mentioned to me at different times, one in Sicily and the other in Rome, of noble devotees, the ruin of whose fortunes was said to have commenced in the extravagant expense which had been incurred in presenting, the *præsepe* or manger. But these Mysteries, in order to answer their design, must not only be instructive, but entertaining; and as, when they became so, the people began to take pleasure in acting them themselves—in interloping,—(against which the priests seem to have fought hard and yet in vain) the most ludicrous images were mixed with the most awful personations: and whatever the subject might be, however sublime, however pathetic, yet the Vice and the Devil, who are the genuine antecessors of Harlequin and the Clown, were necessary component parts. I have myself a piece of this kind, which I transcribed a few years ago at Helmstadt,[1] in Germany, on the education of Eve's children, in which after the fall and repentance of Adam, the offended Maker, as in proof of His reconciliation, condescends to visit them, and to catechize the children,—who with a noble contempt of chronology are all brought together from Abel to Noah. The good children say the ten Commandments, the Belief, and the Lord's Prayer; but Cain and his rout, after he had received a box on the ear for not taking off his hat, and afterwards offering his left hand, is prompted by the devil so to blunder in the Lord's Prayer as to reverse the petitions and say it backward![2]

Unaffectedly I delare I feel pain at repetitions like

[1] Coleridge was in Germany from September, 1798, to November, 1799. It is clear that these remarks were written long before 1818. See Introductory Matter, § 3.

[2] Some remarks on this subject, to be found in the notes of Lecture II., in the "Remains," vol. i., and in which this piece is described more fully, are here added:—

"In this age there was a tendency in writers to the droll and the

these, however innocent. As historical documents they are valuable; but I am sensible that what I can read with my eye with perfect innocence, I cannot without inward fear and misgivings pronounce with my tongue.

Let me, however, be acquitted of presumption if I say that I cannot agree with Mr. Malone, that our ancestors did not perceive the ludicrous in these things, or that they paid no separate attention to the serious and comic parts. Indeed his own statement contradicts it. For what purpose should the Vice leap upon the Devil's back and belabour him, but to produce this separate attention? The people laughed heartily, no doubt. Nor can I conceive any meaning attached to the words "separate attention," that is not fully answered by one part of an exhibition exciting seriousness or pity, and the other raising mirth and loud laughter. That they felt no impiety in the affair is most true. For it

grotesque, and in the little dramas which at that time existed, there were singular instances of these. It was the disease of the age. It is a remarkable fact that Luther and Melancthon, the great religious reformers of that day, should have strongly recommended for the education of children, dramas, which at present would be considered highly indecorous, if not bordering on a deeper sin. From one which they particularly recommended, I will give a few extracts; more I should not think it right to do. The play opens with Adam and Eve washing and dressing their children to appear before the Lord, who is coming from heaven to hear them repeat the Lord's Prayer, Belief, &c. In the next scene the Lord appears seated like a schoolmaster, with the children standing round, when Cain, who is behindhand, and a sad pickle, comes running in with a bloody nose and his hat on. Adam says, 'What, with your hat on!' Cain then goes up to shake hands with the Almighty, when Adam says (giving him a cuff), 'Ah, would you give your left hand to the Lord?' At length Cain takes his place in the class, and it becomes his turn to say the Lord's Prayer. At this time the Devil (a constant attendant at that time) makes his appearance, and getting behind Cain, whispers in his ear; instead of the Lord's Prayer, Cain gives it so changed by the transposition of the words, that the meaning is reversed; yet this is so artfully done by the author, that it is exactly as an obstinate child would answer, who knows his lesson, yet does not

is the very essence of that system of Christian polytheism, which in all its essentials is now fully as gross in Spain, in Sicily and the south of Italy, as it ever was in England in the days of Henry VI.—(nay, more so; for a Wicliffe had then not appeared only, but scattered the good seed widely,) it is an essential part, I say, of that system to draw the mind wholly from its own inward whispers and quiet discriminations, and to habituate the conscience to pronounce sentence in every case according to the established verdicts of the church and the casuists. I have looked through volume after volume of the most approved casuists,—and still I find disquisitions whether this or that act is right, and under what circumstances, to a minuteness that makes reasoning ridiculous, and of a callous and unnatural immodesty, to which none but a monk could harden himself, who has been stripped of all the tender charities of life, yet is goaded on to make war against them by the unsubdued hauntings of our meaner nature, even as dogs are

choose to say it. In the last scene, horses in rich trappings and carriages covered with gold are introduced, and the good children are to ride in them and be Lord Mayors, Lords, &c.; Cain and the bad ones are to be made cobblers and tinkers, and only to associate with such.

"This, with numberless others, was written by Hans Sachs. Our simple ancestors, firm in their faith, and pure in their morals, were only amused by these pleasantries, as they seemed to them, and neither they nor the reformers feared their having any influence hostile to religion. When I was, many years back, in the north of Germany, there were several innocent superstitions in practice. Among others at Christmas, presents used to be given to the children by the parents, and they were delivered on Christmas day by a person who personated, and was supposed by the children to be, Christ: early on Christmas morning he called, knocking loudly at the door, and (having received his instructions) left presents for the good and a rod for the bad. Those who have since been in Germany have found this custom relinquished; it was considered profane and irrational. Yet they have not found the children better, nor the mothers more careful of their offspring; they have not found their devotion more fervent, their faith more strong, nor their morality more pure."

said to get the *hydrophobia* from excessive thirst. I fully believe that our ancestors laughed as heartily as their posterity do at Grimaldi;—and not having been told that they would be punished for laughing, they thought it very innocent;—and if their priests had left out murder in the catalogue of their prohibitions (as indeed they did under certain circumstances of heresy,) the greater part of them, —the moral instincts common to all men having been smothered and kept from development,—would have thought as little of murder.

However this may be, the necessity of at once instructing and gratifying the people produced the great distinction between the Greek and the English theatres;—for to this we must attribute the origin of tragi-comedy, or a representation of human events more lively, nearer the truth, and permitting a larger field of moral instruction, a more ample exhibition of the recesses of the human heart, under all the trials and circumstances that most concern us, than was known or guessed at by Æschylus, Sophocles, or Euripides;—and at the same time we learn to account for, and —relatively to the author—perceive the necessity of the Fool or Clown or both, as the substitutes of the Vice and the Devil, which our ancestors had been so accustomed to see in every exhibition of the stage, that they could not feel any performance perfect without them. Even to this day in Italy, every opera—(even Metastasio obeyed the claim throughout)—must have six characters, generally two pairs of cross lovers, a tyrant and a confidant, or a father and two confidants, themselves lovers;—and when a new opera appears, it is the universal fashion to ask—which is the tyrant, which the lover? &c.

It is the especial honour of Christianity, that in its worst and most corrupted form it cannot wholly separate itself from morality;—whereas the other religions in their best form (I do not include Mohammedanism, which is only an

anomalous corruption of Christianity, like Swedenborgianism,) have no connection with it. The very impersonation of moral evil under the name of Vice, facilitated all other impersonations; and hence we see that the Mysteries were succeeded by Moralities, or dialogues and plots of allegorical personages. Again, some characters in real history had become so famous, so proverbial, as Nero for instance, that they were introduced instead of the moral quality, for which they were so noted:—and in this manner the stage was moving on to the absolute production of heroic and comic real characters, when the restoration of literature, followed by the ever-blessed Reformation, let in upon the kingdom not only new knowledge, but new motive. A useful rivalry commenced between the metropolis on the one hand, the residence, independently of the court and nobles, of the most active and stirring spirits who had not been regularly educated, or who, from mischance or otherwise, had forsaken the beaten track of preferment,—and the universities on the other. The latter prided themselves on their closer approximation to the ancient rules and ancient regularity—taking the theatre of Greece, or rather its dim reflection, the rhetorical tragedies of the poet Seneca, as a perfect ideal, without any critical collation of the times, origin, or circumstances:—whilst, in the mean time, the popular writers, who could not and would not abandon what they had found to delight their countrymen sincerely, and not merely from inquiries first put to the recollection of rules, and answered in the affirmative, as if it had been an arithmetical sum, did yet borrow from the scholars whatever they advantageously could, consistently with their own peculiar means of pleasing.

And here let me pause for a moment's contemplation of this interesting subject.

We call, for we see and feel, the swan and the dove both

transcendently beautiful. As absurd as it would be to institute a comparison between their separate claims to beauty from any abstract rule common to both, without reference to the life and being of the animals themselves, —or as if, having first seen the dove, we abstracted its outlines, gave them a false generalization, called them the principles or ideal of bird-beauty, and then proceeded to criticize the swan or the eagle:—not less absurd is it to pass judgment on the works of a poet on the mere ground that they have been called by the same class-name with the works of other poets in other times and circumstances, or on any ground, indeed, save that of their inappropriateness to their own end and being, their want of significance, as symbols or physiognomy.

O! few have there been among critics, who have followed with the eye of the imagination the imperishable yet ever wandering spirit of poetry through its various metempsychoses, and consequent metamorphoses;—or who have rejoiced in the light of clear perception at beholding with each new birth, with each rare *avatar*, the human race frame to itself a new body, by assimilating materials of nourishment out of its new circumstances, and work for itself new organs of power appropriate to the new sphere of its motion and activity!

I have before spoken of the Romance, or the language formed out of the decayed Roman and the Northern tongues; and comparing it with the Latin, we find it less perfect in simplicity and relation—the privileges of a language formed by the mere attraction of homogeneous parts; but yet more rich, more expressive and various, as one formed by more obscure affinities out of a chaos of apparently heterogeneous atoms. As more than a metaphor,—as an analogy of this, I have named the true genuine modern poetry the romantic; and the works of Shakspere are romantic poetry revealing itself in the drama. If the tragedies of Sophocles

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are in the strict sense of the word tragedies, and the comedies of Aristophanes comedies, we must emancipate ourselves from a false association arising from misapplied names, and find a new word for the plays of Shakspere. For they are, in the ancient sense, neither tragedies nor comedies, nor both in one,—but a different *genus*, diverse in kind, and not merely different in degree. They may be called romantic dramas, or dramatic romances.

A deviation from the simple forms and unities of the ancient stage is an essential principle, and, of course, an appropriate excellence, of the romantic drama. For these unities were to a great extent the natural form of that which in its elements was homogeneous, and the representation of which was addressed pre-eminently to the outward senses;—and though the fable, the language and the characters appealed to the reason rather than to the mere understanding, inasmuch as they supposed an ideal state rather than referred to an existing reality,—yet it was a reason which was obliged to accommodate itself to the senses, and so far became a sort of more elevated understanding. On the other hand, the romantic poetry—the Shaksperian drama—appealed to the imagination rather than to the senses, and to the reason as contemplating our inward nature, and the workings of the passions in their most retired recesses. But the reason, as reason, is independent of time and space: it has nothing to do with them; and hence the certainties of reason have been called eternal truths. As for example—the endless properties of the circle:—what connection have they with this or that age, with this or that country?—The reason is aloof from time and space;—the imagination is an arbitrary controller over both;—and if only the poet have such power of exciting our internal emotions as to make us present to the scene in imagination chiefly, he acquires the right and privilege of using time and space as they exist in imagination, and

obedient only to the laws by which the imagination itself acts. These laws it will be my object and aim to point out as the examples occur, which illustrate them. But here let me remark what can never be too often reflected on by all who would intelligently study the works either of the Athenian dramatists, or of Shakspere, that the very essence of the former consists in the sternest separation of the diverse in kind and the disparate in the degree, whilst the latter delights in interlacing by a rainbow-like transfusion of hues the one with the other.

And here it will be necessary to say a few words on the stage and on stage-illusion.

A theatre, in the widest sense of the word, is the general term for all places of amusement through the ear or eye, in which men assemble in order to be amused by some entertainment presented to all at the same time and in common. Thus, an old Puritan divine says:—"Those who attend public worship and sermons only to amuse themselves, make a theatre of the church, and turn God's house into the devil's. *Theatra ædes diabololatricæ.*" The most important and dignified species of this *genus* is, doubtless, the stage (*res theatralis histrionica*), which, in addition to the generic definition above given, may be characterized in its idea, or according to what it does, or ought to, aim at, as a combination of several or of all the fine arts in an harmonious whole, having a distinct end of its own, to which the peculiar end of each of the component arts, taken separately, is made subordinate and subservient,—that, namely, of imitating reality—whether external things, actions, or passions—under a semblance of reality. Thus, Claude imitates a landscape at sunset, but only as a picture: while a forest-scene is not presented to the spectators as a picture, but as a forest; and though, in the full sense of the word, we are no more deceived by the one than by the other, yet are our feelings very differently affected; and

the pleasure derived from the one is not composed of the same elements as that afforded by the other, even on the supposition that the *quantum* of both were equal. In the former, a picture, it is a condition of all genuine delight that we should not be deceived: in the latter, stage-scenery (inasmuch as its principal end is not in or for itself, as is the case in a picture, but to be an assistance and means to an end out of itself), its very purpose is to produce as much illusion as its nature permits. These, and all other stage presentations, are to produce a sort of temporary half-faith, which the spectator encourages in himself and supports by a voluntary contribution on his own part, because he knows that it is at all times in his power to see the thing as it really is. I have often observed that little children are actually deceived by stage-scenery, never by pictures; though even these produce an effect on their impressible minds, which they do not on the minds of adults. The child, if strongly impressed, does not indeed positively think the picture to be the reality; but yet he does not think the contrary. As Sir George Beaumont was showing me a very fine engraving from Rubens, representing a storm at sea without any vessel or boat introduced, my little boy, then about five years old, came dancing and singing into the room, and all at once (if I may so say) *tumbled in* upon the print. He instantly [illegible] silent and motionless, with the strongest [illegible] wonder and then of grief, in his eyes and countenance, and at length said, "And where is the ship? But that's sunk, and the men are all drowned!"—still keeping his eyes fixed on the print. Now what pictures are to little children, stage-illusion is to men, provided they retain any part of the child's sensibility; except, that in the latter instances, the suspension of the act of comparison, which permits this sort of negative belief, is somewhat more assisted by the will, than in that of a child respecting a picture.

The true stage-illusion in this and in all other things consists—not in the mind's judging it to be a forest, but, in its remission of the judgment that it is not a forest. And this subject of stage-illusion is so important, and so many practical errors and false criticisms may arise, and indeed have arisen, either from reasoning on it as actual delusion (the strange notion, on which the French critics built up their theory, and on which the French poets justify the construction of their tragedies), or from denying it altogether (which seems the end of Dr. Johnson's reasoning, and which, as extremes meet, would lead to the very same consequences, by excluding whatever would not be judged probable by us in our coolest state of feeling, with all our faculties in even balance), that these few remarks will, I hope, be pardoned, if they should serve either to explain or to illustrate the point. For not only are we never absolutely deluded—or anything like it, but the attempt to cause the highest delusion possible to beings in their senses sitting in a theatre, is a gross fault, incident only to low minds, which, feeling that they cannot affect the heart or head permanently, endeavour to call forth the momentary affections. There ought never to be more pain than is compatible with co-existing pleasure, and to be amply repaid by thought.

Shakspere found the infant stage demanding an intermixture of ludicrous character as imperiously as that of Greece did the chorus, and high language accordant. And there are many advantages in this;—a greater assimilation to nature, a greater scope of power, more truths, and more feelings;—the effects of contrast, as in Lear and the Fool; and especially this, that the true language of passion becomes sufficiently elevated by your having previously heard, in the same piece, the lighter conversation of men under no strong emotion. The very nakedness of the stage, too, was advantageous,—for the drama thence became some-

thing between recitation and a re-presentation; and the absence or paucity of scenes allowed a freedom from the laws of unity of place and unity of time, the observance of which must either confine the drama to as few subjects as may be counted on the fingers, or involve gross improbabilities, far more striking than the violation would have caused. Thence, also, was precluded the danger of a false ideal,—of aiming at more than what is possible on the whole. What play of the ancients, with reference to their ideal, does not hold out more glaring absurdities than any in Shakspere? On the Greek plan a man could more easily be a poet than a dramatist; upon our plan more easily a dramatist than a poet.

The Drama generally and Public Taste.

Unaccustomed to address such an audience, and having lost by a long interval of confinement the advantages of my former short schooling,[1] I had miscalculated in my last lecture the proportion of my matter to my time, and by bad economy and unskilful management, the several heads of my discourse failed in making the entire performance correspond with the promise publicly circulated in the weekly announciation of the subjects to be treated. It would indeed have been wiser in me, and perhaps better on the whole, if I had caused my lectures to be announced only as continuations of the main subject. But it [illegible] perforce I must be, gratified by the recollection of whatever has appeared to give you pleasure, I am conscious of something better, though less flattering, a sense of unfeigned gratitude for your forbearance with my defects. Like affectionate guardians, you see without disgust the [illegible]

[1] This would seem to be a portion of a pre-written lecture for the course of 1807-8. Clearly, "in my last address I defined poetry . . ." does not refer to the last note, on the "Progress of the Drama."

wardness, and witness with sympathy the growing pains, of a youthful endeavour, and look forward with a hope, which is its own reward, to the contingent results of practice—to its intellectual maturity.

In my last address I defined poetry to be the art, or whatever better term our language may afford, of representing external nature and human thoughts, both relatively to human affections, so as to cause the production of as great immediate pleasure in each part, as is compatible with the largest possible sum of pleasure on the whole. Now this definition applies equally to painting and music as to poetry; and in truth the term poetry is alike applicable to all three. The vehicle alone constitutes the difference; and the term "poetry" is rightly applied by eminence to measured words, only because the sphere of their action is far wider, the power of giving permanence to them much more certain, and incomparably greater the facility, by which men, not defective by nature or disease, may be enabled to derive habitual pleasure and instruction from them. On my mentioning these considerations to a painter of great genius, who had been, from a most honourable enthusiasm, extolling his own art, he was so struck with their truth, that he exclaimed, "I want no other arguments; —poetry, that is, verbal poetry, must be the greatest: all that proves final causes in the world, proves this; it would be shocking to think otherwise!"—And in truth, deeply, O! far more than words can express, as I venerate the Last Judgment and the Prophets of Michel Angelo Buonarotti,—yet the very pain which I repeatedly felt as I lost myself in gazing upon them, the painful consideration that their having been painted in *fresco* was the sole cause that they had not been abandoned to all the accidents of a dangerous transportation to a distant capital, and that the mere caprice, which made the Neapolitan soldiery destroy the exquisite master-pieces on the walls of the church of

the *Trinitado Monte* after the retreat of their antagonist barbarians, might as easily have made vanish the rooms and open gallery of Raffael, and the yet more unapproachable wonders of the sublime Florentine in the Sixtine Chapel, forced upon my mind the reflection: How grateful the human race ought to be that the works of Euclid, Newton, Plato, Milton, Shakspere, are not subjected to similar contingencies,—that they and their fellows, and the great, though inferior, peerage of undying intellect, are secured; —secured even from a second irruption of Goths and Vandals, in addition to many other safeguards, by the vast empire of English language, laws, and religion founded in America, through the overflow of the power and the virtue of my country:—and that now the great and certain works of genuine fame can only cease to act for mankind, when men themselves cease to be men, or when the planet on which they exist, shall have altered its relations, or have ceased to be. Lord Bacon, in the language of the gods, if I may use an Homeric phrase, has expressed a similar thought:—

"Lastly, leaving the vulgar arguments, that by learning man excelleth man in that wherein man excelleth beasts; that by learning man ascendeth to the heavens and their motions, where in body he cannot come, and the like; let us conclude with the dignity and excellency of knowledge and learning in that whereunto man's nature doth most aspire, which is, immortality or continuance: for to this tendeth generation, and raising of houses and families; to this tend buildings, foundations, and monuments; to this tendeth the desire of memory, fame, and celebration, and in effect the strength of all other human desires. We see then how far the monuments of wit and learning are more durable than the monuments of power, or of the hands. For have not the verses of Homer continued twenty-five hundred years, or more, without the loss of a syllable or letter; during which time infinite palaces, temples, castles, cities, have been decayed and demolished? It is not possible to have the true pictures or statues of Cyrus, Alexander, Cæsar; nor of the kings or great personages of much later years; for the originals cannot last, and the copies cannot but lose of the life

truth. But the images of men's wits and knowledges remain in books, exempted from the wrong of time, and capable of perpetual renovation. Neither are they fitly to be called images, because they generate still, and cast their seeds in the minds of others, provoking and causing infinite actions and opinions in succeeding ages: so that, if the invention of the ship was thought so noble, which carrieth riches and commodities from place to place, and consociateth the most remote regions in participation of their fruits; how much more are letters to be magnified, which as ships pass through the vast seas of time, and make ages so distant to participate of the wisdom, illuminations, and inventions, the one of the other?"[1]

But let us now consider what the drama should be. And first, it is not a copy, but an imitation, of nature. This is the universal principle of the fine arts. In all well laid out grounds what delight do we feel from that balance and antithesis of feelings and thoughts! How natural! we say;—but the very wonder that caused the exclamation, implies that we perceived art at the same moment. We catch the hint from nature itself. Whenever in mountains [illegible] cataracts we discover a likeness to any thing artificial which yet we know is not artificial—what pleasure! And so it is in appearances known to be artificial, which appear to be natural. This applies in due degrees, regulated by [illegible]ood sense, from a clump of trees to the "Paradise [illegible]thello." It would be easy to apply it to painting [illegible]h with greater abstraction of thought, and [illegible] equally just analogies—to music. But [illegible]rs;—suffice it that one great principle is [illegible] fine arts,—a principle which probably is [illegible]ll consciousness, without which we should [illegible] only by discontinuous moments, and be [illegible]imals instead of men;—I mean that ever-[illegible], or balancing, of images, notions, or feel-[illegible] as in opposition to each other;—in short, [illegible]h of identity and contrariety; the least degree

[1] [illegible]vancement of Learning," book i. *sub fine*.—S. T. C.

of which constitutes likeness, the greatest absolute difference; but the infinite gradations between these two form all the play and all the interest of our intellectual and moral being, till it leads us to a feeling and an object more awful than it seems to me compatible with even the present subject to utter aloud, though I am most desirous to suggest it. For there alone are all things at once different and the same; there alone, as the principle of all things, does distinction exist unaided by division; there are will and reason, succession of time and unmoving eternity, infinite change and ineffable rest!—

> "Return Alpheus! the dread voice is past
> Which shrunk thy streams!"
>
> ———"Thou honour'd flood,
> Smooth-*flowing* Avon, crown'd with vocal reeds,
> That strain I heard, was of a higher mood!—
> But now my *voice* proceeds."

We may divide a dramatic poet's characteristics befor[illegible] we enter into the component merits of any one work, and with reference only to those things which are to be th[illegible] materials of all, into language, passion, and ch[illegible] always bearing in mind that these must act [illegible] each other,—the language inspired by the [illegible] language and the passion modified and [illegible] character. To the production of the hi[illegible] these three, there are requisite in the m[illegible] —good sense; talent; sensibility; ima[illegible] the perfection of a work we should ad[illegible] lesser importance, yet necessary for th[illegible] foliage of the column and the roof—fa[illegible] sense of beauty.

As to language;—it cannot be supposed [illegible] should make his characters say all that the[illegible]

that, his whole drama considered, each scene, or paragraph should be such as, on cool examination, we can conceive it likely that men in such situations would say, in that order, or with that perfection. And yet, according to my feelings, it is a very inferior kind of poetry, in which, as in the French tragedies, men are made to talk in a style which few indeed even of the wittiest can be supposed to converse in, and which both is, and on a moment's reflection appears to be, the natural produce of the hot-bed of vanity, namely, the closet of an author, who is actuated originally by a desire to excite surprise and wonderment at his own superiority to other men,—instead of having felt so deeply on certain subjects, or in consequence of certain imaginations, as to make it almost a necessity of his nature to seek for sympathy,—no doubt, with that honourable desire of permanent action which distinguishes genius. —Where then is the difference?—In this, that each part should be proportionate, though the whole may be perhaps impossible. At all events, it should be compatible with sound sense and logic in the mind of the poet himself.

It is to be lamented that we judge of books by books, instead of referring what we read to our own experience. One great use of books is to make their contents a motive for observation. The German tragedies have in some respects been justly ridiculed. In them the dramatist often becomes a novelist in his directions to the actors, and thus degrades tragedy into pantomime. Yet still the consciousness of the poet's mind must be diffused over that of the reader or spectator; but he himself, according to his genius, elevates us; and by being always in keeping, prevents us from perceiving any strangeness, though we feel great exultation. Many different kinds of style may be admirable, both in different men, and in different parts of the same poem.

See the different language which strong feelings may

justify in Shylock, and learn from Shakspere's conduct of character the terrible force of very plain and calm diction, when known to proceed from a resolved and impassioned man.

It is especially with reference to the drama, and its characteristics in any given nation, or at any particular period, that the dependence of genius on the public taste becomes a matter of the deepest importance. I do not mean that taste which springs merely from caprice or fashionable imitation, and which, in fact, genius can, and by degrees will, create for itself; but that which arises out of wide-grasping and heart-enrooted causes, which is epidemic, and in the very air that all breathe. This it is which kills, or withers, or corrupts. Socrates, indeed, might walk arm and arm with Hygeia, whilst pestilence, with a thousand furies running to and fro, and clashing against each other in a complexity and agglomeration of horrors, was shooting her darts of fire and venom all around him. Even such was Milton; yea, and such, in spite of all that has been babbled by his critics in pretended excuse for his damning, because for them too profound, excellencies,—such was Shakspere. But alas! the exceptions prove the rule. For who will dare to force his way out of the crowd,—not of the mere vulgar,—but of the vain and banded aristocracy of intellect, and presume to join the almost supernatural beings that stand by themselves aloof?

Of this diseased epidemic influence there are two forms especially preclusive of tragic worth. The first is the necessary growth of a sense and love of the ludicrous, and a morbid sensibility of the assimilative power,—an inflammation produced by cold and weakness,—which in the boldest bursts of passion will lie in wait for a jeer at any phrase, that may have an accidental coincidence in the mere words with something base or trivial. For instance,

—to express woods, not on a plain, but clothing a hill, which overlooks a valley, or dell, or river, or the sea,—the trees rising one above another, as the spectators in an ancient theatre,—I know no other word in our language, (bookish and pedantic terms out of the question,) but *hanging* woods, the *sylvæ superimpendentes* of Catullus;[1] yet let some wit call out in a slang tone,—"the gallows!" and a peal of laughter would damn the play. Hence it is that so many dull pieces have had a decent run, only because nothing unusual above, or absurd below, mediocrity furnished an occasion,—a spark for the explosive materials collected behind the orchestra. But it would take a volume of no ordinary size, however laconically the sense were expressed, if it were meant to instance the effects, and unfold all the causes, of this disposition upon the moral, intellectual, and even physical character of a people, with its influences on domestic life and individual deportment. A good document upon this subject would be the history of Paris society and of French, that is, Parisian, literature from the commencement of the latter half of the reign of Louis XIV. to that of Buonaparte, compared with the preceding philosophy and poetry even of Frenchmen themselves.

The second form, or more properly, perhaps, another distinct cause, of this diseased disposition is matter of exultation to the philanthropist and philosopher, and of regret to the poet, the painter, and the statuary alone, and to them only as poets, painters, and statuaries;—namely, the security, the comparative equability, and ever increasing sameness of human life. Men are now so seldom thrown into wild circumstances, and violences of excitement, that the language of such states, the laws of association of feel-

[1] "Confestim Penios adest, viridantia Tempe,
Tempe, quæ sylvæ cingunt superimpendentes."
Epith. Pel. et Th. 286-7.

ing with thought, the starts and strange far-flights of the assimilative power on the slightest and least obvious likeness presented by thoughts, words, or objects,—these are all judged of by authority, not by actual experience,—by what men have been accustomed to regard as symbols of these states, and not the natural symbols, or self-manifestations of them.

Even so it is in the language of man, and in that of nature. The sound *sun*, or the figures *s*, *u*, *n*, are purely arbitrary modes of recalling the object, and for visual mere objects they are not only sufficient, but have infinite advantages from their very nothingness *per se*. But the language of nature is a subordinate *Logos*, that was in the beginning, and was with the thing it represented, and was the thing it represented.

Now the language of Shakspere, in his "Lear" for instance, is a something intermediate between these two; or rather it is the former blended with the latter,—the arbitrary, not merely recalling the cold notion of the thing, but expressing the reality of it, and, as arbitrary language is an heirloom of the human race, being itself a part of that which it manifests. What shall I deduce from the preceding positions? Even this,—the appropriate, the never to be too much valued advantage of the theatre, if only the actors were what we know they have been,—a delightful, yet most effectual, remedy for this dead palsy of the public mind. What would appear mad or ludicrous in a book, when presented to the senses under the form of reality, and with the truth of nature, supplies a species of actual experience. This is indeed the special privilege of a great actor over a great poet. No part was ever played in perfection, but nature justified herself in the hearts of all her children, in what state soever they were, short of absolute moral exhaustion, or downright stupidity. There is no time given to ask questions or to pass judgments; we are

taken by storm, and, though in the histrionic art many a clumsy counterfeit, by caricature of one or two features, may gain applause as a fine likeness, yet never was the very thing rejected as a counterfeit. O! when I think of the inexhaustible mine of virgin treasure in our Shakspere, that I have been almost daily reading him since I was ten years old,—that the thirty intervening years[1] have been uninterruptingly and not fruitlessly employed in the study of the Greek, Latin, English, Italian, Spanish, and German *belle lettrists*, and the last fifteen years in addition, far more intensely in the analysis of the laws of life and reason as they exist in man,—and that upon every step I have made forward in taste, in acquisition of facts from history or my own observation, and in knowledge of the different laws of being and their apparent exceptions, from accidental collision of disturbing forces,—that at every new accession of information, after every successful exercise of meditation, and every fresh presentation of experience, I have unfailingly discovered a proportionate increase of wisdom and intuition in Shakspere;—when I know this, and know too, that by a conceivable and possible, though hardly to be expected, arrangement of the British theatres, not all, indeed, but a large, a very large, proportion of this indefinite all—(round which no comprehension has yet drawn the line of circumscription, so as to say to itself, "I have seen the whole")—might be sent into the heads and hearts—into the very souls of the mass of mankind, to whom, except by this living comment and interpretation, it must remain for ever a sealed volume, a deep well without a wheel or a windlass;—it seems to me a pardonable enthusiasm to steal away from sober likelihood, and share in

[1] This brings us to the lectures of 1811-12. There is much in Mr. Collier's second lecture identical with the matter in this note, and poetry *was* defined in his first lecture. But the note and the lecture are not the same.

so rich a feast in the faery world of possibility! Yet even in the grave cheerfulness of a circumspect hope, much, very much, might be done; enough, assuredly, to furnish a kind and strenuous nature with ample motives for the attempt to effect what may be effected.

Shakspere as a Poet generally.

Clothed in radiant armour, and authorized by titles sere and manifold, as a poet, Shakspere came forward to demand the throne of fame, as the dramatic poet of England. His excellencies compelled even his contemporaries to seat him on that throne, although there were giants in those days contending for the same honour. Hereafter I would fain endeavour to make out the title of the English drama as created by, and existing in, Shakspere, and its right to the supremacy of dramatic excellence in general. But he had shown himself a poet, previously to his appearance as a dramatic poet; and had no "Lear," no "Othello," "Henry IV.," no "Twelfth Night" ever appeared, we must have admitted that Shakspere possessed the chief, if not every, requisite of a poet,—deep feeling and exquisite sense of beauty, both as exhibited to the eye in the combinations of form, and to the ear in sweet and appropriate melody; that these feelings were under the command of his own will; that in his very first productions he projected his mind out of his own particular being, and felt, and made others feel, on subjects no way connected with himself, except by force of contemplation and that sublime faculty by which a great mind becomes that on which it meditates. To this must be added that affectionate love of nature and natural objects, without which no man could have observed so steadily, or painted so truly and passionately, the very minutest beauties of the external world:—

"And when thou hast on foot the purblind hare,
Mark the poor wretch; to overshoot his troubles,
How he outruns the wind, and with what care
He cranks and crosses with a thousand doubles;
The many musits through the which he goes
Are like a labyrinth to amaze his foes.

"Sometimes [1] he runs among the [1] flock of sheep,
To make the cunning hounds mistake their smell;
And sometime where earth-delving conies keep,
To stop the loud pursuers in their yell;
And sometime sorteth with a herd of deer:
Danger deviseth shifts, wit waits on fear.

"For there his smell with others' being mingled,
The hot scent-snuffing hounds are driven to doubt,
Ceasing their clamorous cry, till they have singled,
With much ado, the cold fault cleanly out,
Then do they spend their mouths; echo replies,
As if another chase were in the skies.

"By this poor Wat, far off, upon a hill,
Stands on his hinder legs with listening ear,
To hearken if his foes pursue him still:
Anon their loud alarums he doth hear,
And now his grief may be compared well
To one sore-sick, that hears the passing-bell.

"Then shalt thou see the dew-bedabbled wretch
Turn, and return, indenting with the way:
Each envious briar his weary legs doth scratch,
Each shadow makes him stop, each murmur stay.
For misery is trodden on by many,
And being low, never relieved by any."

Venus and Adonis.

And the preceding description:—

"But, lo! from forth a copse that neighbours by,
A breeding jennet, lusty, young and proud, &c."

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[1] Read "sometime" and "a".

is much more admirable, but in parts less fitted for quotation.

Moreover Shakspere had shown that he possessed fancy, considered as the faculty of bringing together images dissimilar in the main by some one point or more of likeness, as in such a passage as this:—

> "Full gently now she takes him by the hand,
> A lily prisoned in a jail of snow,
> Or ivory in an alabaster band;
> So white a friend ingirts so white a foe!"—*Ib.*

And still mounting the intellectual ladder, he had as unequivocally proved the indwelling in his mind of imagination, or the power by which one image or feeling is made to modify many others, and by a sort of fusion to force many into one;—that which afterwards showed itself in such might and energy in "Lear," where the deep anguish of a father spreads the feeling of ingratitude and cruelty over the very elements of heaven;—and which, combining many circumstances into one moment of consciousness, tends to produce that ultimate end of all human thought and human feeling, unity, and thereby the reduction of the spirit to its principle and fountain, who is alone truly one. Various are the workings of this the greatest faculty of the human mind, both passionate and tranquil. In its tranquil and purely pleasurable operation, it acts chiefly by creating out of many things, as they would have appeared in the description of an ordinary mind, detailed in unimpassioned succession, a oneness, even as nature, the greatest of poets, acts upon us, when we open our eyes upon an extended prospect. Thus the flight of Adonis in the dusk of the evening:—

> "Look! how a bright star shooteth from the sky;
> So glides he in the night from Venus' eye!"

How many images and feelings are here brought together

without effort and without discord, in the beauty of Adonis, the rapidity of his flight, the yearning, yet hopelessness, of the enamoured gazer, while a shadowy ideal character is thrown over the whole! Or this power acts by impressing the stamp of humanity, and of human feelings, on inanimate or mere natural objects:—

> "Lo! here the gentle lark, weary of rest,
> From his moist cabinet mounts up on high,
> And wakes the morning, from whose silver breast
> The sun ariseth in his majesty,
> Who doth the world so gloriously behold,
> The cedar-tops and hills seem burnish'd gold."

Or again, it acts by so carrying on the eye of the reader as to make him almost lose the consciousness of words,—to make him see everything flashed, as Wordsworth has vividly and appropriately said,—

> "*Flashed*[1] upon that inward eye
> Which is the bliss of solitude;—

and this without exciting any painful or laborious attention, without any anatomy of description, (a fault not uncommon in descriptive poetry)—but with the sweetness and easy movement of nature. This energy is an absolute essential of poetry, and of itself would constitute a poet, though not one of the highest class; it is, however, a most hopeful symptom, and the "Venus and Adonis" is one continued specimen of it.

In this beautiful poem there is an endless activity of thought in all the possible associations of thought with thought, thought with feeling, or with words, of feelings with feelings, and of words with words.

> "Even as the sun, with purple-colour'd face,
> Had ta'en his last leave of the weeping morn,

[1] "They flash" is Wordsworth's text. He is speaking of daffodils.

"Rose-cheek'd Adonis hied him to the chase;
Hunting he loved, but love he laugh'd to scorn.
Sick-thoughted Venus makes amain unto him,
And like a bold-faced suitor 'gins to woo him."

Remark the humanizing imagery and circumstances of the first two lines, and the activity of thought in the play of words in the fourth line. The whole stanza presents at once the time, the appearance of the morning, and the two persons distinctly characterized, and in six simple verses puts the reader in possession of the whole argument of the poem.

"Over one arm the lusty courser's rein,
Under the[1] other was the tender boy,
Who blush'd and pouted in a dull disdain,
With leaden appetite, unapt to toy;
She red and hot, as coals of glowing fire,
He red for shame, but frosty to[1] desire":—

This stanza and the two following afford good instance of that poetic power, which I mentioned above, of making every thing present to the imagination—both the forms and the passions which modify those forms, either actually as in the representations of love, or anger, or other human affections: or imaginatively, by the different manner in which inanimate objects, or objects unimpassioned themselves, are caused to be seen by the mind in moments of strong excitement, and according to the kind of the excitement,—whether of jealousy, or rage, or love, in the only appropriate sense of the word, or of the lower impulses of our nature, or finally of the poetic feeling itself. It is perhaps, chiefly in the power of producing and reproducing the latter that the poet stands distinct.

The subject of the "Venus and Adonis" is unpleasing; but the poem itself is for that very reason the more illustrative of Shakspere. There are men who can write passages of

[1] Read "her" and "in."

deepest pathos and even sublimity on circumstances personal to themselves and stimulative of their own passions; but they are not, therefore, on this account poets. Read that magnificent burst of woman's patriotism and exultation, Deborah's song of victory; it is glorious, but nature is the poet there. It is quite another matter to become all things and yet remain the same,—to make the changeful god be felt in the river, the lion and the flame;—this it is, that is the true imagination. Shakspere writes in this poem, as if he were of another planet, charming you to gaze on the movements of Venus and Adonis, as you would on the twinkling dances of two vernal butterflies.

Finally, in this poem and the "Rape of Lucrece," Shakspere gave ample proof of his possession of a most profound, energetic, and philosophical mind, without which he might have pleased, but could not have been a great dramatic poet. Chance and the necessity of his genius combined to lead him to the drama his proper province; in his conquest of which we should consider both the difficulties which opposed him, and the advantages by which he was assisted.[1]

Shakspere's Judgment equal to his Genius.

Thus then Shakspere appears, from his "Venus and Adonis" and "Rape of Lucrece" alone, apart from all his great works, to have possessed all the conditions of the true poet. Let me now proceed to destroy, as far as may be in my power, the popular notion that he was a great dramatist by mere instinct, that he grew immortal in his own despite, and sank below men of second or third-rate power, when he attempted aught beside the drama—even as bees con-

[1] Compare the report of the 3rd Lecture of 1811-12, and chap. xv. of the *Biographia Literaria*, given in the Appendix.

struct their cells and manufacture their honey to admirable perfection; but would in vain attempt to build a nest. Now this mode of reconciling a compelled sense of inferiority with a feeling of pride, began in a few pedants, who having read that Sophocles was the great model of tragedy, and Aristotle the infallible dictator of its rules, and finding that the "Lear," "Hamlet," "Othello," and other masterpieces, were neither in imitation of Sophocles nor in obedience to Aristotle,—and not having (with one or two exceptions) the courage to affirm, that the delight which their country received from generation to generation, in defiance of the alterations of circumstances and habits, was wholly groundless—took upon them, as a happy medium and refuge, to talk of Shakspere as a sort of beautiful *lusus naturæ*, a delightful monster,—wild, indeed, and without taste or judgment, but like the inspired idiots so much venerated in the East, uttering, amid the strangest follies, the sublimest truths. In nine places out of ten in which I find the awful name mentioned, it is with some epithet of "wild," "irregular," "pure child of nature," &c. If all this be true, we must submit to it; though to a thinking mind it cannot but be painful to find any excellence, merely human, thrown out of all human analogy, and thereby leaving us neither rules for imitation, nor motives to imitate;—but if false, it is a dangerous falsehood;—for it affords a refuge to secret self-conceit,—enables a vain man at once to escape his reader's indignation by general swoln panegyric, and merely by his *ipse dixit* to treat, as contemptible, what he has not intellect enough to comprehend, or soul to feel, without assigning any reason, or referring his opinion to any demonstrative principle;—thus leaving Shakspere as a sort of Grand Lama, adored indeed, and his very excrements prized as relics, but with no authority or real influence. I grieve that every late voluminous edition of his works would enable me to substantiate the present charge

with a variety of facts one-tenth of which would of themselves exhaust the time allotted to me. Every critic, who has or has not made a collection of black letter books—in itself a useful and respectable amusement,—puts on the seven-league boots of self-opinion, and strides at once from an illustrator into a supreme judge, and blind and deaf, fills his three-ounce phial at the waters of Niagara; and determines positively the greatness of the cataract to be neither more nor less than his three-ounce phial has been able to receive.

I think this a very serious subject. It is my earnest desire—my passionate endeavour,—to enforce at various times and by various arguments and instances the close and reciprocal connection of just taste with pure morality. Without that acquaintance with the heart of man, or that ...cility and childlike gladness to be made acquainted with ... which those only can have, who dare look at their own ...ts—and that with a steadiness which religion only has ... power of reconciling with sincere humility;—without ... and the modesty produced by it, I am deeply convinced ... no man, however wide his erudition, however patient ...ntiquarian researches, can possibly understand, or be ...y of understanding, the writings of Shakspere.

...uredly that criticism of Shakspere will alone be ... which is reverential. The Englishman, who without ...erence, a proud and affectionate reverence, can utter the ...me of William Shakspere, stands disqualified for the ...ice of critic. He wants one at least of the very senses, ...e language of which he is to employ, and will discourse, ... best, but as a blind man, while the whole harmonious ...reation of light and shade with all its subtle interchange ...f deepening and dissolving colours rises in silence to the ...silent *fiat* of the uprising Apollo. However inferior in ...ability I may be to some who have followed me, I own I ...am proud that I was the first in time who publicly demonstrated to the full extent of the position, that the supposed

irregularity and extravagancies of Shakspere were the mere dreams of a pedantry that arraigned the eagle because it had not the dimensions of the swan. In all the successive courses of lectures delivered by me, since my first attempt at the Royal Institution, it has been, and it still remains, my object, to prove that in all points from the most important to the most minute, the judgment of Shakspere is commensurate with his genius,—nay, that his genius reveals itself in his judgment, as in its most exalted form. And the more gladly do I recur to this subject from the clear conviction, that to judge aright, and with distinct consciousness of the grounds of our judgment, concerning the works of Shakspere, implies the power and the means of judging rightly of all other works of intellect, those of abstract science alone excepted.

It is a painful truth that not only individuals, but even whole nations, are ofttimes so enslaved to the habits of their education and immediate circumstances, as not to judge disinterestedly even on those subjects, the very pleasure arising from which consists in its disinterestedness, namely, on subjects of taste and polite literature. Instead of deciding concerning their own modes and customs by any rule of reason, nothing appears rational, becoming, or beautiful to them, but what coincides with the particularities of their education. In this narrow circle, individuals may attain to exquisite discrimination, as the French critics have done in their own literature; but a true critic can no more be such without placing himself on some central point, from which he may command the whole, that is, some general rule, which, founded in reason, or the faculties common to all men, must therefore apply to each,—than an astronomer can explain the movements of the solar system without taking his stand in the sun. And let me remark, that this will not tend to produce despotism, but, on the contrary, true tolerance, in the

critic. He will, indeed, require, as the spirit and substance of a work, something true in human nature itself, and independent of all circumstances; but in the mode of applying it, he will estimate genius and judgment according to the felicity with which the imperishable soul of intellect shall have adapted itself to the age, the place, and the existing manners. The error he will expose lies in reversing this, and holding up the mere circumstances as perpetual, to the utter neglect of the power which can alone animate them. For art cannot exist without, or apart from, nature; and what has man of his own to give to his fellow-man, but his own thoughts and feelings, and his observations so far as they are modified by his own thoughts or feelings?

Let me, then, once more submit this question to minds emancipated alike from national, or party, or sectarian prejudice:—Are the plays of Shakspere works of rude uncultivated genius, in which the splendour of the parts compensates, if aught can compensate, for the barbarous shapelessness and irregularity of the whole?—Or is the form equally admirable with the matter, and the judgment of the great poet not less deserving our wonder than his genius?—Or, again, to repeat the question in other words: Is Shakspere a great dramatic poet on account only of those beauties and excellencies which he possesses in common with the ancients, but with diminished claims to our love and honour to the full extent of his differences from them?—Or are these very differences additional proofs of his poetic wisdom, at once results and symbols of living power as contrasted with lifeless mechanism—of free and rival originality as contradistinguished from servile imitation, or, more accurately, a blind copying of effects, instead of a true imitation of the essential principles?[1]—Imagine not

[1] "It was Lessing who first introduced the name and the works of Shakspere to the admiration of the Germans; and I should not, perhaps,

that I am about to oppose genius to rules. No! the comparative value of these rules is the very cause to be tried. The spirit of poetry, like all other living powers, must of necessity circumscribe itself by rules, were it only to unite power with beauty. It must embody in order to reveal itself; but a living body is of necessity an organized one; and what is organization but the connection of parts in and for a whole, so that each part is at once end and means?—This is no discovery of criticism;—it is a necessity of the human mind; and all nations have felt and obeyed it, in the invention of metre, and measured sounds, as the vehicle and *involucrum* of poetry—itself a fellow-growth from the same life,—even as the bark is to the tree!

No work of true genius dares want its appropriate form; neither indeed is there any danger of this. As it must not so genius cannot, be lawless: for it is even this that constitutes it genius—the power of acting creatively under laws of its own origination. How then comes it that not only single *Zoili*, but whole nations have combined in unhesitating condemnation of our great dramatist, as a sport of African nature, rich in beautiful monsters,—as a wild heath where islands of fertility look the greener from the surrounding waste, where the loveliest plants now shoot out among unsightly weeds, and now are choked by the parasitic growth, so intertwined that we cannot disentangle

go too far, if I add that it was Lessing who first proved to all thinking men, even to Shakspere's own countrymen, the true nature of the apparent irregularities. These, he demonstrated, were deviations only from the *accidents* of the Greek Tragedy; and from such accidents as hung a heavy weight on the wings of the Greek poets, and narrowed their flight within the limits of what we may call the *heroic opera*. He proved that in all the essentials of art, no less than in the truth of nature, the plays of Shakspere were incomparably more coincident with the principles of Aristotle than the productions of Corneille and Racine, notwithstanding the boasted regularity of the latter."—*Biographia Literaria*, chap. xxiii.

the weed without snapping the flower?—In this statement I have had no reference to the vulgar abuse of Voltaire,[1] save as far as his charges are coincident with the decisions of Shakspere's own commentators and (so they would tell you) almost idolatrous admirers. The true ground of the mistake lies in the confounding mechanical regularity with organic form. The form is mechanic, when on any given material we impress a pre-determined form, not necessarily arising out of the properties of the material;—as when to a mass of wet clay we give whatever shape we wish it to retain when hardened. The organic form, on the other hand, is innate; it shapes, as it developes, itself from within, and the fulness of its development is one and the same with the perfection of its outward form. Such as the life is, such is the form. Nature, the prime genial artist, inexhaustible in diverse powers, is equally inexhaustible in forms;—each exterior is the physiognomy of the being within,—its true image reflected and thrown out from the concave mirror;—and even such is the appropriate excellence of her chosen poet, of our own Shakspere,—himself a nature humanized, a genial understanding directing

[1] "Take a slight specimen of it.

Je suis bien loin assurément de justifier en tout la tragédie d'Hamlet; *c'est une pièce grossière et barbare, qui ne serait pas supportée par la plus vile populace de la France et de l'Italie.* Hamlet y devient fou au second acte, et sa maîtresse folle au troisième; le prince tue le père de sa maîtresse, feignant de tuer un rat, et l'héroïne se jette dans la rivière. On fait sa fosse sur le théâtre; des fossoyeurs disent des *quolibets* dignes d'eux, en tenant dans leurs mains des têtes de morts; le prince Hamlet répond à leurs *grossièretés abominables par des folies non moins dégoûtantes.* Pendant ce temps-là, un des acteurs fait la conquête de la Pologne. *Hamlet, sa mère, et son beau-père boivent ensemble sur le théâtre: on chante à table, on s'y querelle, on se bat, on se tue: on croirait que cet ouvrage est le fruit de l'imagination d'un sauvage ivre.*' Dissertation before 'Semiramis.'

This is not, perhaps, very like Hamlet; but nothing can be more like Voltaire."—H. N. C.

self-consciously a power and an implicit wisdom deeper even than our consciousness.

I greatly dislike beauties and selections in general; but as proof positive of his unrivalled excellence, I should like to try Shakspere by this criterion. Make out your amplest catalogue of all the human faculties, as reason or the moral law, the will, the feeling of the coincidence of the two (a feeling *sui generis et demonstratio demonstrationum*) called the conscience, the understanding or prudence, wit, fancy, imagination, judgment,—and then of the objects on which these are to be employed, as the beauties, the terrors, and the seeming caprices of nature, the realities and the capabilities, that is, the actual and the ideal, of the human mind, conceived as an individual or as a social being, as in innocence or in guilt, in a play-paradise, or in a war-field of temptation;—and then compare with Shakspere under each of these heads all or any of the writers in prose and verse that have ever lived! Who, that is competent to judge, doubts the result?—And ask your own hearts,—ask your own common-sense—to conceive the possibility of the man being—I say not, the drunken savage of that wretched sciolist, whom Frenchmen, to their shame, have honoured before their elder and better worthies,—but the anomalous the wild, the irregular, genius of our daily criticism. What! are we to have miracles in sport?—Or, I speak reverently, does God choose idiots by whom to convey divine truths to man?

Recapitulation and Summary of the Characteristics of Shakspere's Dramas.[1]

In lectures, of which amusement forms a large part of the object, there are some peculiar difficulties. The architect places his foundation out of sight, and the musician tunes his instrument before he makes his appearance; but the lecturer has to try his chords in the presence of the assembly; an operation not likely, indeed, to produce much pleasure, but yet indispensably necessary to a right understanding of the subject to be developed.

Poetry in essence is as familiar to barbarous as to civilized nations. The Laplander and the savage Indian are cheered by it as well as the inhabitants of London and Paris;—its spirit takes up and incorporates surrounding materials, as a plant clothes itself with soil and climate, whilst it exhibits the working of a vital principle within independent of all accidental circumstances. And to judge with fairness of an author's works, we ought to distinguish what is inward and essential from what is outward and circumstantial. It is essential to poetry that it be simple, and appeal to the elements and primary laws of our nature; that it be sensuous, and by its imagery elicit truth at a flash; that it be impassioned, and be able to move our feelings and awaken our affections. In comparing different poets with each other, we should inquire which have brought into the fullest play our imagination and our reason, or have created the greatest excitement and produced the completest harmony. If we consider great exquisiteness of language and sweetness of metre alone,[2] it is impossible

[1] "For the most part communicated by Mr. Justice Coleridge."—H. N. C. That is to say, written by Mr. Justice Coleridge, (Sir John Taylor Coleridge,) and revised by Mr. H. N. Coleridge.

[2] "That astonishing product of matchless talent and ingenuity, Pope's Translation of the Iliad."—*Biographia Literaria*, chap. i.

to deny to Pope the character of a delightful writer; but whether he be a poet, must depend upon our definition of the word; and, doubtless, if everything that pleases be poetry, Pope's satires and epistles must be poetry. This I must say, that poetry, as distinguished from other modes of composition, does not rest in metre, and that it is not poetry, if it make no appeal to our passions or our imagination. One character belongs to all true poets, that they write from a principle within, not originating in anything without; and that the true poet's work in its form, its shapings, and its modifications, is distinguished from all other works that assume to belong to the class of poetry, as a natural from an artificial flower, or as the mimic garden of a child from an enamelled meadow. In the former the flowers are broken from their stems and stuck into the ground; they are beautiful to the eye and fragrant to the sense, but their colours soon fade, and their odour is transient as the smile of the planter;—while the meadow may be visited again and again with renewed delight, its beauty is innate in the soul, and its bloom is of the freshness of nature.

The next ground of critical judgment, and point of comparison, will be as to how far a given poet has been influenced by accidental circumstances. As a living poet must surely write, not for the ages past, but for that in which he lives, and those which are to follow, it is, on the one hand, natural that he should not violate, and on the other, necessary that he should not depend on, the mere manners and modes of his day. See how little does Shakspere leave us to regret that he was born in his particular age! The great æra in modern times was what is called the Restoration of Letters!—the ages preceding it are called the dark ages; but it would be more wise, perhaps, to call them the ages in which we were in the dark. It is usually overlooked that the supposed dark period was not

universal, but partial and successive, or alternate; that the dark age of England was not the dark age of Italy, but that one country was in its light and vigour, whilst another was in its gloom and bondage. But no sooner had the Reformation sounded through Europe like the blast of an archangel's trumpet, than from king to peasant there arose an enthusiasm for knowledge; the discovery of a manuscript became the subject of an embassy; Erasmus read by moonlight, because he could not afford a torch, and begged a penny, not for the love of charity, but for the love of learning. The three great points of attention were religion, morals, and taste; men of genius as well as men of learning, who in this age need to be so widely distinguished, then alike became copyists of the ancients; and this, indeed, was the only way by which the taste of mankind could be improved, or their understandings informed. Whilst Dante imagined himself a humble follower of Virgil, and Ariosto of Homer, they were both unconscious of that greater power working within them, which in many points carried them beyond their supposed originals. All that discoveries bear the stamp of the age in which they are made;—hence we perceive the effects of the purer religion of the moderns, visible for the most part in their tales; and in reading their works we should not content ourselves with the mere narratives of events long since passed, but should learn to apply their maxims and conduct to ourselves.

Having intimated that times and manners lend their form and pressure to genius, let me once more draw a slight parallel between the ancient and modern stage, the stages of Greece and of England. The Greeks were polytheists; their religion was local; almost the only object of all their knowledge, art and taste, was their gods; and, accordingly, their productions were, if the expression may be allowed, statuesque, whilst those of the moderns are

picturesque. The Greeks reared a structure, which in its parts, and as a whole, fitted the mind with the calm and elevated impression of perfect beauty and symmetrical proportion. The moderns also produced a whole, a more striking whole: but it was by blending materials and fusing the parts together. And as the Pantheon is to York Minster or Westminster Abbey, so is Sophocles compared with Shakspere; in the one a completeness, a satisfaction, an excellence, on which the mind rests with complacency; in the other a multitude of interlaced materials, great and little, magnificent and mean, accompanied, indeed, with the sense of a falling short of perfection, and yet, at the same time, so promising of our social and individual progression, that we would not, if we could, exchange it for that repose of the mind which dwells on the forms of symmetry in the acquiescent admiration of grace. The general characteristic of the ancient and modern drama might be illustrated by a parallel of the ancient and modern music;—the one consisting of melody arising from a succession only of pleasing sounds,—the modern embracing harmony also, the result of combination and the effect of whole.

I have said, and I say it again, that great as was the genius of Shakspere, his judgment was at least equal to it. Of this any one will be convinced, who attentively considers those points in which the dramas of Greece and England differ, from the dissimilitude of circumstances by which each was modified and influenced. The Greek stage had its origin in the ceremonies of a sacrifice, such as of the goat to Bacchus, whom we most erroneously regard as merely the jolly god of wine;—for among the ancients he was venerable, as the symbol of that power which acts without our consciousness in the vital energies of nature, —the *vinum mundi*,—as Apollo was that of the conscious agency of our intellectual being. The heroes of old under

the influence of this Bacchic enthusiasm performed more than human actions;—hence tales of the favourite champions soon passed into dialogue. On the Greek stage the chorus was always before the audience; the curtain was never dropped, as we should say: and change of place being therefore, in general, impossible, the absurd notion of condemning it merely as improbable in itself was never entertained by any one. If we can believe ourselves at Thebes in one act, we may believe ourselves at Athens in the next.[1] If a story lasts twenty-four hours or twenty-four years, it is equally improbable. There seems to be no just boundary but what the feelings prescribe. But on the Greek stage where the same persons were perpetually before the audience, great judgment was necessary in venturing on any such change. The poets never, therefore, attempted to impose on the senses by bringing places to men, but they did bring men to places, as in the well-known instance in the Eumenides, where during an evident retirement of the chorus from the orchestra, the scene is changed to Athens, and Orestes is first introduced in the temple of Minerva, and the chorus of Furies come in afterwards in pursuit of him.[2]

In the Greek drama there were no formal divisions into scenes and acts; there were no means, therefore, of allowing for the necessary lapse of time between one part of the dialogue and another, and unity of time in a strict sense was, of course, impossible. To overcome that difficulty of accounting for time, which is effected on the modern stage

[1] See Section iv: Notes on Othello, Act. i.

[2] "Æsch. Eumen. v. 230—239. *Notandum est, scenam jam Athenas translatam sic institui, ut primo Orestes solus conspiciatur in templo Minervæ supplex ejus simulacrum venerans; paulo post autem eum consequantur Eumenides, &c.* Schütz's note. The recessions of the chorus were termed *μεταναστάσεις*. There is another instance in the Ajax, v. 814."—H. N. C.

by dropping a curtain, the judgment and great genius of the ancients supplied music and measured motion, and with the lyric ode filled up the vacuity. In the story of the Agamemnon of Æschylus, the capture of Troy is supposed to be announced by a fire lighted on the Asiatic shore, and the transmission of the signal by successive beacons to Mycenæ. The signal is first seen at the 21st line, and the herald from Troy itself enters at the 486th, and Agamemnon himself at the 783rd line. But the practical absurdity of this was not felt by the audience, who, in imagination stretched minutes into hours, while they listened to the lofty narrative odes of the chorus which almost entirely fill up the interspace. Another fact deserves attention here, namely, that regularly on the Greek stage a drama, or acted story, consisted in reality of three dramas, called together a trilogy, and performed consecutively in the course of one day. Now you may conceive a tragedy of Shakspere's as a trilogy connected in one single representation. Divide "Lear" into three parts, and each would be a play with the ancients; or take the three Æschylean dramas of Agamemnon, and divide them into, or call them, as many acts, and they together would be one play. The first act would comprise the usurpation of Ægisthus, and the murder of Agamemnon: the second, the revenge of Orestes, and the murder of his mother; and the third, the penance and absolution of Orestes;—occupying a period of twenty-two years.

The stage in Shakspere's time was a naked room with a blanket for a curtain; but he made it a field for monarchs. That law of unity, which has its foundations, not in the factitious necessity of custom, but in nature itself, the unity of feeling, is everywhere and at all times observed by Shakspere in his plays. Read "Romeo and Juliet;"—all is youth and spring;—youth with all its follies, its virtues, its precipitancies;—spring with its odours, its flowers, and

ncy; one and the same feeling that com-
s, goes through, and ends the play. The old men,
the Capulets and the Montagues, are not common old men;
they have an eagerness, a heartiness, a vehemence, the
effect of spring; while Romeo, his change of passion, his
sudden marriage, and his rash death, are all the effects of
youth:—whilst in Juliet love has all that is tender and
melancholy in the nightingale, all that is voluptuous in the
rose, with whatever is sweet in the freshness of spring: but
it ends with a long deep sigh like the last breeze of the
Italian evening. This unity of feeling and character per-
vades every drama of Shakspere.

It seems to me that his plays are distinguished from
those of all other dramatic poets by the following cha-
acteristics:

1. Expectation in preference to surprise. It is like the
ne reading of the passage;—"God said, Let there be
ght, and there was *light*;"—not there *was* light. As the
eling with which we start at a shooting star, compared
ith that of watching the sunrise at the pre-established
oment, such and so low is surprise compared with
pectation.

2. Signal adherence to the great law of nature, that all
posites tend to attract and temper each other. Passion
Shakspere generally displays libertinism, but involves
rality; and if there are exceptions to this, they are,
ndependently of their intrinsic value, all of them indicative
of individual character, and, like the farewell admonitions
of a parent, have an end beyond the parental relation.
Thus the Countess's beautiful precepts to Bertram, by
elevating her character, raise that of Helena her favourite,
and soften down the point in her which Shakspere does
not mean us not to see, but to see and to forgive, and at
length to justify. And so it is in Polonius, who is the
personified memory of wisdom no longer actually possessed.

This admirable character is always un[illegible]resen[illegible] stage. Shakspere never intended to exhibit hi[illegible] buffoon; for although it was natural that Hamlet,—[illegible] young man of fire and genius, detesting formality, and disliking Polonius on political grounds, as imagining that he had assisted his uncle in his usurpation,—should express himself satirically,—yet this must not be taken as exactly the poet's conception of him. In Polonius a certain induration of character had arisen from long habits of business; but take his advice to Laertes, and Ophelia's reverence for his memory, and we shall see that he was meant to be represented as a statesman somewhat past his faculties,—his recollections of life all full of wisdom, and showing a knowledge of human nature, whilst what immediately takes place before him, and escapes from him, [illegible] indicative of weakness.

But as in Homer all the deities are in armour, ev[illegible] Venus; so in Shakspere all the characters are stro[illegible] Hence real folly and dulness are made by him the vehic[illegible] of wisdom. There is no difficulty for one being a foo[illegible] imitate a fool: but to be, remain, and speak like a w[illegible] man and a great wit, and yet so as to give a vivid re[illegible]sentation of a veritable fool,—*hic labor, hoc opus est.* [illegible] drunken constable is not uncommon, nor hard to d[illegible] but see and examine what goes to make up a Dogberr[illegible]

3. Keeping at all times in the high road of life. S[illegible]spere has no innocent adulteries, no interesting incests, [illegible] virtuous vice:—he never renders that amiable whic[illegible] religion and reason alike teach us to detest, or clothe[illegible] impurity in the garb of virtue, like Beaumont and Fletcher[illegible] the Kotzebues of the day. Shakspere's fathers are roused by ingratitude, his husbands stung by unfaithfulness; in him, in short, the affections are wounded in those points in which all may, nay, must, feel. Let the morality of Shakspere be contrasted with that of the writers of his

own, or the succeeding, age, or of those of the present day, who boast their superiority in this respect. No one can dispute that the result of such a comparison is altogether in favour of Shakspere:—even the letters of women of high rank in his age were often coarser than his writings. If he occasionally disgusts a keen sense of delicacy, he never injures the mind; he neither excites, nor flatters, passion, nor order to degrade the subject of it; he does not use the vilest thing for a vile purpose, nor carries on warfare against virtue, by causing wickedness to appear as no wickedness, through the medium of a morbid sympathy with the unfortunate. In Shakspere vice never walks as in twilight: nothing is purposely out of its place;—he inverts not the order of nature and propriety,—does not make every magistrate a drunkard or glutton, nor every honest man meek, humane, and temperate; he has no benevolent butchers, nor any sentimental rat-catchers.

3. Independence of the dramatic interest on the plot.[1] The interest in the plot is always in fact on account of the characters, not *vice versa*, as in almost all other writers; the plot is a mere canvas and no more. Hence arises the perfect justification of the same stratagem being used in regard to Benedick and Beatrice,—the vanity in each being the same. Take away from the "Much Ado About Nothing" all that which is not indispensable to the plot, either as having little to do with it, or, at best, like Dogberry and his comrades, forced into the service, when any other less ludicrously absurd watchmen and night-constables would have answered the mere necessities of the action;—take

[1] "Coleridge's opinion was, that some of the plays of our 'myriad-minded' bard ought never to be acted, but looked on as poems to be read, and contemplated; and so fully was he impressed with this feeling, that in his gayer moments he would often say, 'There should be an Act of Parliament to prohibit their representation.'"—*Gillman's "Life of Coleridge."*

away Benedick, Beatrice, Dogberry, and the reaction of the former on the character of Hero,—and what will remain? In other writers the main agent of the plot is always the prominent character; in Shakspere it is so, or is not so, as the character is in itself calculated, or not calculated, to form the plot. Don John is the main-spring of the plot of this play; but he is merely shown and then withdrawn.

5. Independence of the interest on the story as the ground-work of the plot. Hence Shakspere never took the trouble of inventing stories.[1] It was enough for him to select from those that had been already invented or recorded such as had one or other, or both, of two recommendations, namely, suitableness to his particular purpose and their being parts of popular tradition,—names which we had often heard, and of their fortunes, and ... which all we wanted was, to see the man himself. So ... just the man himself, the Lear, the Shylock, the Richard ... that Shakspere makes us for the first time acquainted with ... Omit the first scene in "Lear," and yet everything ... remain; so the first and second scenes in the "Merchant ... of Venice." Indeed it is universally true.

6. Interfusion of the lyrical—that which in its ... essence is poetical—not only with the dramatic, as in ... plays of Metastasio, where at the end of the scene ... the *aria* as the *exit* speech of the character,—but ... and through the dramatic. Songs in Shakspere are ... troduced as songs only, just as songs are in real life, beau... fully as some of them are characteristic of the person who ... has sung or called for them, as Desdemona's "Willow," and ...

[1] "The greater part, if not all of his dramas were, as far as the names and the main incidents are concerned, already stock plays. All the stories, at least, on which they are built, pre-existed in the chronicles, ballads, or translations of contemporary or preceding English writers." —*Biographia Literaria*, Satyrane's Letters, Letter ii.

Ophelia's wild snatches, and the sweet carollings in "As You Like It." But the whole of the "Midsummer Night's Dream" is one continued specimen of the dramatized lyrical. And observe how exquisitely the dramatic of Hotspur;—

> "Marry, and I'm glad on't with all my heart;
> I had rather be a kitten and cry—mew," &c.

melts away into the lyric of Mortimer;—

> "I understand thy looks: that pretty Welsh
> Which thou pourest down from these swelling heavens,
> I am too perfect in," &c.
>
> *Henry IV. Part I. Act III. Scene* 1.

ever. The characters of the *dramatis personæ*, like those in plan life, are to be inferred by the reader;—they are not Lost to him. And it is well worth remarking that Shakcerta e's characters, like those in real life, are very commonly in tl nderstood, and almost always understood by different "Cy ons in different ways. The causes are the same in *rifacir* case. If you take only what the friends of the his in cter say, you may be deceived, and still more so, if him t hich his enemies say; nay, even the character him- The e s himself through the medium of his character, and "Jeron ctly as he is." Take all together, not omitting a had le hint from the clown or the fool, and perhaps your dates sion will be right; and you may know whether you the fact discovered the poet's own idea, by all the ches receiving light from it, and attesting its reality by cting it.

stly, in Shakspere the heterogeneous is united, as it is nature. You must not suppose a pressure or passion ways acting on or in the character;—passion in Shakspere that by which the individual is distinguished from other t that which makes a different kind of him. Shaksp llowed the main march of the human affections.

entered into no analysis of the passions or faiths of men, but assured himself that such and such passions and faiths were grounded in our common nature, and not in the mere accidents of ignorance or disease. This is an important consideration, and constitutes our Shakspere the morning star, the guide and the pioneer, of true philosophy

SECTION II.

ORDER OF SHAKSPERE'S PLAYS.[1]

VARIOUS attempts have been made to arrange the plays of Shakspere, each according to its priority in time, by proofs derived from external documents. How unsuccessful these have been might easily be shown, not only from the widely different results arrived at by men,

[1] For convenience of comparison with later Shaksperian criticisms Mr. Dowden's arrangement is subjoined:—

1. *Pre-Shaksperian Group. Touched by Shakspere.*
Titus Andronicus: 1588-90.
1 Henry VI.: 1590-1.

2. *Early Comedy.*
Love's Labour's Lost: 1590.
Comedy of Errors: 1591.
Two Gentlemen of Verona: 1592-3.
Midsummer Night's Dream: 1593-4.

3. *Marlowe-Shaksperian Group. Early History.*
2 & 3 Henry VI.: 1591-2
Richard III.: 1593.

4. *Early Tragedy.*
Romeo and Juliet: 1591? 1596-7?

5. *Middle History.*
Richard II: 1594.
King John: 1595.

6. *Middle Comedy.*
Merchant of Venice: 1596.

all deeply versed in the black-letter books, old plays, pamphlets, manuscript records and catalogues of that age, but also from the fallacious and unsatisfactory nature of the facts and assumptions on which the evidence rests. In that age, when the press was chiefly occupied with controversial or practical divinity,—when the law, the church and the state engrossed all honour and respectability,—

7. *Later History. History and Comedy united.*
1 & 2 Henry IV.: 1597-8.
Henry V.: 1599.

8. *Later Comedy.*
A. *Rough and boisterous.*
Taming of the Shrew: 1597?
Merry Wives of Windsor: 1598?

B. *Joyous, refined, romantic.*
Much Ado about Nothing: 1598.
As You Like It: 1599.
Twelfth Night: 1600-1.

C. *Serious, dark, ironical.*
All's Well that Ends Well: 1601-2?
Measure for Measure: 1603.
Troilus and Cressida: 1603? revised 1607?

9. *Middle Tragedy.*
Julius Cæsar: 1601.
Hamlet: 1602.

10. *Later Tragedy.*
Othello: 1604.
Lear: 1605.
Macbeth: 1606.
Antony and Cleopatra: 1607.
Coriolanus: 1608.
Timon of Athens: 1607-8.

11. *Romances.*
Pericles: 1608.
Cymbeline: 1609.
Tempest: 1610.
Winter's Tale: 1610-11.

when a degree of disgrace, *levior quædam infamiæ macula*, was attached to the publication of poetry, and even to have sported with the Muse, as a private relaxation, was supposed to be—a venial fault, indeed, yet—something beneath the gravity of a wise man,—when the professed poets were so poor, that the very expenses of the press demanded the liberality of some wealthy individual, so that two-thirds of Spenser's poetic works, and those most highly praised by his learned admirers and friends, remained for many years in manuscript, and in manuscript perished,—when the amateurs of the stage were comparatively few, and therefore for the greater part more or less known to each other, —when we know that the plays of Shakspere, both during d after his life, were the property of the stage, and pub- ed by the players, doubtless according to their notions cceptability with the visitants of the theatre,—in such age, and under such circumstances, can an allusion or erence to any drama or poem in the publication of a temporary be received as conclusive evidence, that such ma or poem had at that time been published? Or, her, can the priority of publication itself prove anything vour of actually prior composition?

e are tolerably certain, indeed, that the "Venus and is," and the "Rape of Lucrece," were his two earliest and though not printed until 1593, in the twenty- year of his age, yet there can be little doubt that ey had remained by him in manuscript many years. For r. Malone has made it highly probable, that he has com-

12. *Fragments.*
Two Noble Kinsmen: 1612.
Henry VIII.: 1612-13.

Poems.
Venus and Adonis: 1592?
The Rape of Lucrece: 1593-4.
Sonnets: 1595-1605?

menced a writer for the stage in 1591, when he was twenty-seven years old, and Shakspere himself assures us that the "Venus and Adonis" was the first heir of his invention.[1]

Baffled, then, in the attempt to derive any satisfaction from outward documents, we may easily stand excused if we turn our researches towards the internal evidences furnished by the writings themselves, with no other positive *data* than the known facts, that the "Venus and Adonis" was printed in 1593, the "Rape of Lucrece" in 1594, and that the "Romeo and Juliet" had appeared in 1595,—and with no other presumptions than that the poems, his very first productions, were written many years earlier,—(for who can believe that Shakspere could have remained t his twenty-ninth or thirtieth year without attempting poe composition of any kind?)—and that between these "Romeo and Juliet" there had intervened one or other dramas, or the chief materials, at least, of th although they may very possibly have appeared after success of the "Romeo and Juliet" and some other circu stances had given the poetry an authority with the p prietors, and created a prepossession in his favour with theatrical audiences.

Classification attempted, 1802.

First Epoch.

The London Prodigal.
Cromwell.
Henry VI., three parts, first edition.
The old King John.
Edward III.

[1] "But if the first heir of my invention prove deformed, I shall b sorry it had so noble a godfather," &c.—*Dedication of the* "Venus and Adonis" *to Lord Southampton.*—S. T. C.

The old Taming of the Shrew.
Pericles.

All these are transition-works, *Uebergangswerke;* not his, yet of him.

Second Epoch.

All's Well That Ends Well;—but afterwards worked up afresh, (*umgearbeitet*) especially Parolles.
The Two Gentlemen of Verona; a sketch.
Romeo and Juliet: first draft of it.

Third Epoch

rises into the full, although youthful, Shakspere: it was negative period of his perfection.
Love's Labour's Lost.
Twelfth Night.
As You Like It.
Midsummer Night's Dream.
Richard II.
Henry IV. and V.
Henry VIII.; *Gelegenheitsgedicht.*
Romeo and Juliet, as at present.
Merchant of Venice.

Fourth Epoch.

Much Ado about Nothing.
Merry Wives of Windsor; first edition.
Henry VI.; *rifacimento.*

Fifth Epoch.

he period of beauty was now past; and that of δεινότης nd grandeur succeeds.
Lear.
Macbeth.
Hamlet.
Timon of Athens; an after vibration of Hamlet.

Troilus and Cressida: *Uebergang in die Ironie.*
The Roman Plays.
King John, as at present.
Merry Wives of Windsor, } *umgearbeitet.*
Taming of the Shrew. }
Measure for Measure.
Othello.
Tempest.
Winter's Tale.
Cymbeline.

Classification attempted, 1810.[1]

Shakspere's earliest dramas I take to be,
Love's Labour's Lost.
All's Well That Ends Well.
Comedy of Errors.
Romeo and Juliet.
In the second class I reckon
Midsummer Night's Dream.
As You Like It.
Tempest.[2]
Twelfth Night.
In the third, as indicating a greater energy—not m
of poetry, but—of all the world of thought, yet still
some of the growing pains, and the awkwardness of g
I place
Troilus and Cressida.
Cymbeline.
Merchant of Venice.
Much Ado about Nothing.
Taming of the Shrew.

[1] Coleridge lectured at the Royal Institution in 1810.
[2] Compare the later and improved classification of 1811-12, in Mr. Collier's note on the Fourth Lecture of 1811-12

In the fourth, I place the plays containing the greatest characters;

Macbeth.
Lear.
Hamlet.
Othello.

And lastly, the historic dramas, in order to be able to show my reasons for rejecting some whole plays, and very many scenes in others.

Classification attempted, 1819.

I think Shakspere's earliest dramatic attempt—perhaps prior in conception to the "Venus and Adonis," and ed before he left Stratford—was "Love's Labour's " Shortly afterwards I suppose "Pericles" and in scenes in "Jeronymo," to have been produced: and e same epoch, I place the "Winter's Tale" and mbeline," differing from the "Pericles" by the entire *ento* of it, when Shakspere's celebrity as poet, and erest, no less than his influence as manager, enabled o bring forward the laid by labours of his youth. xample of "Titus Andronicus," which, as well as rmo," was most popular in Shakspere's first epoch, the young dramatist to the lawless mixture of and manners. In this same epoch I should place "Comedy of Errors," remarkable as being the only *ecimen of poetical farce in our language*, that is, in- ntionally such; so that all the distinct kinds of drama, hich might be educed *a priori*, have their representatives Shakspere's works. I say intentionally such: for many Beaumont and Fletcher's plays, and the greater part of en Jonson's comedies, are farce-plots. I add "All's Well at Ends Well," originally intended as the counterpart of

"Love's Labour's Lost," "Taming of the Shrew," "Midsummer Night's Dream," "Much Ado About Nothing," and "Romeo and Juliet."

Second Epoch.

Richard II.
King John.
Henry VI.—*rifacimento* only.
Richard III.

Third Epoch.

Henry IV.
Henry V.
Merry Wives of Windsor.
Henry VIII.,—a sort of historical masque, or play.

Fourth Epoch

gives all the graces and facilities of a genius in possession and habitual exercise of power, and pec of the feminine, the *lady's* character:—

Tempest.
As You Like It.
Merchant of Venice.
Twelfth Night.

and, finally, at its very point of culmination,—

Lear.
Hamlet.
Macbeth.
Othello.

Last Epoch,

when the energies of intellect in the cycle of genius we though in a rich and more potentiated form, becomin predominant over passion and creative self-manifestation

Measure for Measure.
Timon of Athens.
Coriolanus.
Julius Cæsar.
Antony and Cleopatra.
Troilus and Cressida.

Merciful, wonder-making Heaven! what a man was this Shakspere! Myriad-minded, indeed, he was!

SECTION III.

NOTES ON SHAKSPERE'S PLAYS FROM ENGLISH HISTORY.

THE first form of poetry is the epic, the essence of which may be stated as the successive in events and characters. This must be distinguished from narration, in which there must always be a narrator, from whom the objects represented receive a colouring and a manner;—whereas in the epic, as in the so-called poems of Homer, the whole is completely objective, and the representation is a pure reflection. The next form into which poetry passed was the dramatic:—both forms having a common basis with a certain difference, and that difference not consisting in the dialogue alone. Both are founded on the relation of providence to the human will; and this relation is the universal element, expressed under different points of view according to the difference of religions, and the moral and intellectual cultivation of different nations. In the epic poem fate is represented as overruling the will, and making it instrumental to the accomplishment of its designs:—

——— Διὸς δὲ τελείετο βουλή.

In the drama, the will is exhibited as struggling with fate, a great and beautiful instance and illustration of which is the Prometheus of Æschylus; and the deepest effect is produced, when the fate is represented as a higher and

intelligent will, and the opposition of the individual as springing from a defect.

In order that a drama may be properly historical, it is necessary that it should be the history of the people to whom it is addressed. In the composition, care must be taken that there appear no dramatic improbability, as the reality is taken for granted. It must, likewise, be poetical; —that only, I mean, must be taken which is the permanent in our nature, which is common, and therefore deeply interesting to all ages. The events themselves are immaterial, otherwise than as the clothing and manifestation of the spirit that is working within. In this mode, the unity resulting from succession is destroyed, but is supplied by a unity of a higher order, which connects the events by reference to the workers, gives a reason for them in the motives, and presents men in their causative character. It takes, therefore, that part of real history which is the least known, and infuses a principle of life and organization into the naked facts, and makes them all the framework of an animated whole.

In my happier days, while I had yet hope and onward-looking thoughts, I planned an historical drama of King Stephen, in the manner of Shakspere. Indeed it would be desirable that some man of dramatic genius should dramatize all those omitted by Shakspere, as far down as Henry VII. Perkin Warbeck would make a most interesting drama. A few scenes of Marlowe's Edward II. might be preserved. After Henry VIII., the events are too well and distinctly known, to be, without plump inverisimilitude, crowded together in one night's exhibition. Whereas, the history of our ancient kings—the events of their reigns, I mean,—are like stars in the sky;—whatever the real interspaces may be, and however great, they seem close to each other. The stars—the events—strike us and remain in our eye, little modified by the difference of dates. An

historic drama is, therefore, a collection of events borrowed from history, but connected together in respect of cause and time, poetically and by dramatic fiction. It would be a fine national custom to act such a series of dramatic histories in orderly succession, in the yearly Christmas holidays, and could not but tend to counteract that inock cosmopolitism, which under a positive term really implies nothing but a negation of, or indifference to, the particular love of our country. By its nationality must every nation retain its independence;—I mean a nationality *quoad* the nation. Better thus;—nationality in each individual, *quoad* his country, is equal to the sense of individuality *quoad* himself; but himself as subsensuous, and central. Patriotism is equal to the sense of individuality reflected from every other individual. There may come a higher virtue in both—just cosmopolitism. But this latter is not possible but by antecedence of the former.

Shakspere has included the most important part of nine reigns in his historical dramas—namely—King John,—Richard II.—Henry IV. (two)—Henry V.—Henry VI. (three) including Edward V.,[1]—and Henry VIII.,—in all ten plays. There remain, therefore, to be done, with exception of a single scene or two that should be adopted from Marlowe—eleven reigns—of which the first two appear the only unpromising subjects;—and those two dramas must be formed wholly or mainly of invented private stories, which, however, could not have happened except in consequence of the events and measures of these reigns, and which should furnish opportunity both of exhibiting the manners and oppressions of the times, and of narrating dramatically the great events;—if possible—the death of the two sovereigns, at least of the latter, should be made to

[1] The text is apparently corrupt here. It is clear that we should read,—"Henry VI. (three) and Richard III., including Edward IV. and Edward V."

have some influence on the finale of the story. All the rest are glorious subjects; especially Henry I. (being the struggle between the men of arms and of letters, in the persons of Henry and Becket,) Stephen, Richard I., Edward II., and Henry VII.

King John.

Act i. sc. 1.

> *Bast.* James Gurney, wilt thou give us leave awhile?
> *Gur.* Good leave, good Philip.[1]
> *Bast.* Philip? *sparrow!* James, &c.

Theobald adopts Warburton's conjecture of "*spare me.*" O true Warburton! and the *sancta simplicitas* of honest dull Theobald's faith in him! Nothing can be more lively or characteristic than "Philip? Sparrow!" Had Warburton read old Skelton's "Philip Sparrow," an exquisite and original poem, and, no doubt, popular in Shakspere's time, even Warburton would scarcely have made so deep a plunge into the *bathetic* as to have deathified "sparrow" into "spare me!"

Act iii. sc. 2. Speech of Faulconbridge:—

> "Now, by my life, this day grows wondrous hot;
> Some *airy* devil hovers in the sky, &c."

Theobald adopts Warburton's conjecture of "fiery."

I prefer the old text; the word "devil" implies "fiery." You need only read the line, laying a full and strong emphasis on "devil," to perceive the uselessness and tastelessness of Warburton's alteration.

Richard II.

I have stated that the transitional link between the epic poem and the drama is the historic drama; that in the

[1] "For an instance of Shakspere's power *in minimis*, I generally quote James Gurney's character in 'King John.' How individual and comical he is with the four words allowed to his dramatic life!"—*Table Talk*, March 12, 1827.

epic poem a pre-announced fate gradually adjusts and employs the will and the events as its instruments, whilst the drama, on the other hand, places fate and will in opposition to each other, and is then most perfect, when the victory of fate is obtained in consequence of imperfections in the opposing will, so as to leave a final impression that the fate itself is but a higher and a more intelligent will.

From the length of the speeches, and the circumstance that, with one exception, the events are all historical, and presented in their results, not produced by acts seen by, or taking place before, the audience, this tragedy is ill suited to our present large theatres. But in itself, and for the closet,[1] I feel no hesitation in placing it as the first and most admirable of all Shakspere's purely historical plays. For the two parts of "Henry IV." form a species of themselves, which may be named the mixed drama. The distinction does not depend on the mere quantity of historical events in the play compared with the fictions; for there is as much history in "Macbeth" as in "Richard," but in the relation of the history to the plot. In the purely historical plays, the history forms the plot: in the mixed, it directs it; in the rest, as "Macbeth," "Hamlet," "Cymbeline," "Lear," it subserves it. But, however unsuited to the stage this drama may be, God forbid that even there it should fall dead on the hearts of jacobinized Englishmen! Then, indeed, we might say—*præteriit gloria mundi!* For the spirit of patriotic reminiscence is the all-permeating soul of this noble work. It is, perhaps, the most purely historical of Shakspere's dramas. There are not in it, as in the others, characters introduced merely for the purpose of giving a greater individuality and realness, as in the comic parts of "Henry IV.," by presenting, as it were, our very selves. Shakspere avails himself of every opportunity

[1] See Note from Gillman, Section I., p. 239.

to effect the great object of the historic drama, that, namely, of familiarizing the people to the great names of their country, and thereby of exciting a steady patriotism, a love of just liberty, and a respect for all those fundamental institutions of social life, which bind men together:—

> "This royal throne of kings, this sceptre'd isle,
> This earth of majesty, this seat of Mars,
> This other Eden, demi-paradise;
> This fortress, built by nature for herself,
> Against infection, and the hand of war;
> This happy breed of men, this little world;
> This precious stone set in the silver sea,
> Which serves it in the office of a wall,
> Or as a moat defensive to a house,
> Against the envy of less happier lands;
> This blessed plot, this earth, this realm, this England,
> This nurse, this teeming womb of royal kings,
> Fear'd by their breed, and famous by their birth," &c.

Add the famous passage in King John:—

> "This England never did, nor ever shall,
> Lie at the proud foot of a conqueror,
> But when it first did help to wound itself.
> Now these her princes are come home again,
> Come the three corners of the world in arms,
> And we shall shock them: nought shall make us rue,
> If England to itself do rest but true."

And it certainly seems that Shakspere's historic dramas produced a very deep effect on the minds of the English people, and in earlier times they were familiar even to the least informed of all ranks, according to the relation of Bishop Corbett. Marlborough, we know, was not ashamed to confess that his principal acquaintance with English history was derived from them; and I believe that a large part of the information as to our old names and achievements even now abroad is due, directly or indirectly, to Shakspere.

Admirable is the judgment with which Shakspere always

in the first scenes prepares, yet how naturally, and with what concealment of art, for the catastrophe. Observe how he here presents the germ of all the after events in Richard's insincerity, partiality, arbitrariness, and favoritism, and in the proud, tempestuous, temperament of his barons. In the very beginning, also, is displayed that feature in Richard's character, which is never forgotten throughout the play—his attention to decorum, and high feeling of the kingly dignity. These anticipations show with what judgment Shakspere wrote, and illustrate his care to connect the past and future, and unify them with the present by forecast and reminiscence.

It is interesting to a critical ear to compare the six opening lines of the play—

> "Old John of Gaunt, time-honour'd Lancaster,
> Hast thou, according to thy oath and band," &c.

each closing at the tenth syllable, with the rhythmless metre of the verse in "Henry VI." and "Titus Andronicus," in order that the difference, indeed, the heterogeneity, of the two may be felt *etiam in simillimis prima superficie*. Here the weight of the single words supplies all the relief afforded by intercurrent verse, while the whole represents the mood. And compare the apparently defective metre of Bolingbroke's first line,—

> "Many years of happy days befall—"

with Prospero's,

> "Twelve years since, Miranda! twelve years since—"

The actor should supply the time by emphasis, and pause on the first syllable of each of these verses.

Act i. sc. 1. Bolingbroke's speech:—

> "First, (heaven be the record to my speech!)
> In the devotion of a subject's love," &c.

I remember in the Sophoclean drama no more striking

example of the τὸ πρέπον καὶ σεμνόν than this speech; and the rhymes in the last six lines well express the preconcertedness of Bolingbroke's scheme, so beautifully contrasted with the vehemence and sincere irritation of Mowbray.

Ib. Bolingbroke's speech:—

> "Which blood, like sacrificing Abel's, cries
> Even from the tongueless caverns of the earth,
> To *me*, for justice and rough chastisement."

Note the δεινόν of this "to me," which is evidently felt by Richard:—

> "How high a pitch his resolution soars!"

and the affected depreciation afterwards:—

> "As he is but my father's brother's son."

Ib. Mowbray's speech:—

> "In haste whereof, most heartily I pray
> Your highness to assign our trial day."

The occasional interspersion of rhymes, and the more frequent winding up of a speech therewith—what purpose was this designed to answer? In the earnest drama, I mean. Deliberateness? An attempt, as in Mowbray, to collect himself and be cool at the close?—I can see that in the following speeches the rhyme answers the end of the Greek chorus, and distinguishes the general truths from the passions of the dialogue; but this does not exactly justify the practice,[1] which is unfrequent in proportion to the excellence of Shakspere's plays. One thing, however, is to be observed,—that the speakers are historical, known, and so far formal, characters, and their reality is already a fact. This should be borne in mind. The whole of this

[1] Lope de Vega, in his "New Art of Play-Writing" (*Arte nuevo de hacer comedias*, 1609), lays it down as a rule, that an actor should always leave the stage with a pointed observation or a couplet.

scene of the quarrel between Mowbray and Bolingbroke seems introduced for the purpose of showing by anticipation the characters of Richard and Bolingbroke. In the latter there is observable a decorous and courtly checking of his anger in subservience to a predetermined plan, especially in his calm speech after receiving sentence of banishment compared with Mowbray's unaffected lamentation. In the one, all is ambitious hope of something yet to come; in the other it is desolation and a looking backward of the heart.

Ib. sc. 2.

> "*Gaunt.* Heaven's is the quarrel; for heaven's substitute,
> His deputy anointed in his right,
> Hath caused his death: the which, if wrongfully,
> Let heaven revenge; for I may never lift
> An angry arm against his minister."

Without the hollow extravagance of Beaumont and Fletcher's ultra-royalism, how carefully does Shakspere acknowledge and reverence the eternal distinction between the mere individual, and the symbolic or representative, on which all genial law, no less than patriotism, depends. The whole of this second scene commences, and is anticipative of, the tone and character of the play at large.

Ib. sc. 3. In none of Shakspere's fictitious dramas, or in those founded on a history as unknown to his auditors generally as fiction, is this violent rupture of the succession of time found:—a proof, I think, that the pure historic drama, like "Richard II." and "King John," had its own laws.

Ib. Mowbray's speech:—

> "A dearer *merit*[1]
> Have I deserved at your highness' hand."[2]

[1] See Nares' Glossary. *To merit* is used by Chapman in the sense of *to reward*,—

> "The king will *merit* it with gifts."
> *Il.* ix. 259.

[2] Read "hands."

O, the instinctive propriety of Shakspere in the choice of words!

Ib. Richard's speech:

> "Nor never by advised purpose meet,
> To plot, contrive, or complot any ill,
> 'Gainst us, our state, our subjects, or our land."

Already the selfish weakness of Richard's character opens. Nothing will such minds so readily embrace, as indirect ways softened down to their *quasi*-consciences by policy, expedience, &c.

Ib. Mowbray's speech:—

> ". . . . All the world's my way."
>
> "The world was all before him."[1]—*Milt.*

Ib.

> "*Boling.* How long a time lies in one little word!
> Four lagging winters, and four wanton springs,
> End in a word: such is the breath of kings."

Admirable anticipation!

Ib. sc. 4. This is a striking conclusion of a first act,—letting the reader into the secret;—having before impressed us with the dignified and kingly manners of Richard, yet by well managed anticipations leading us on to the full gratification of pleasure in our own penetration. In this scene a new light is thrown on Richard's character. Until now he has appeared in all the beauty of royalty; but here, as soon as he is left to himself, the inherent weakness of his character is immediately shown. It is a weakness, however, of a peculiar kind, not arising from want of personal courage, or any specific defect of faculty, but rather an intellectual femininenes, which feels a necessity of ever leaning on the breast of others, and of reclining on those

[1] The reference is borrowed from Johnson, and misquoted.
"The world was all before them, where to choose
Their place of rest."—*Paradise Lost*, xii. 646.

who are all the while known to be inferiors. To this must be attributed as its consequences all Richard's vices, his tendency to concealment, and his cunning, the whole operation of which is directed to the getting rid of present difficulties. Richard is not meant to be a debauchee; but we see in him that sophistry which is common to man, by which we can deceive our own hearts, and at one and the same time apologize for, and yet commit, the error. Shakspere has represented this character in a very peculiar manner. He has not made him amiable with counterbalancing faults; but has openly and broadly drawn those faults without reserve, relying on Richard's disproportionate sufferings and gradually emergent good qualities for our sympathy; and this was possible, because his faults are not positive vices, but spring entirely from defect of character.

Act ii. sc. 1.

"*K. Rich.* Can sick men play so nicely with their names?"

Yes! on a death-bed there is a feeling which may make all things appear but as puns and equivocations. And a passion there is that carries off its own excess by plays on words as naturally, and, therefore, as appropriately to drama, as by gesticulations, looks, or tones. This belongs to human nature as such, independently of associations and habits from any particular rank of life or mode of employment; and in this consist Shakspere's vulgarisms, as in Macbeth's—

"The devil damn thee black, thou cream-faced loon!" &c.

This is (to equivocate on Dante's words) in truth the *nobile volgare eloquenza*. Indeed it is profoundly true that there is a natural, an almost irresistible, tendency in the mind, when immersed in one strong feeling, to connect that feeling with every sight and object around it; especially if there be opposition, and the words addressed to it are in

any way repugnant to the feeling itself, as here in the instance of Richard's unkind language:

"Misery makes sport to mock itself."

No doubt, something of Shakspere's punning must be attributed to his age, in which direct and formal combats of wit were a favourite pastime of the courtly and accomplished. It was an age more favourable, upon the whole, to vigour of intellect than the present, in which a dread of being thought pedantic dispirits and flattens the energies of original minds. But independently of this, I have no hesitation in saying that a pun, if it be congruous with the feeling of the scene, is not only allowable in the dramatic dialogue, but oftentimes one of the most effectual intensives of passion.

Ib.

"*K. Rich.* Right; you say true: as Hereford's love, so his;
As theirs, so mine; and all be as it is."

The depth of this, compared with the first scene;—

"How high a pitch," &c.

There is scarcely anything in Shakspere in its degree, more admirably drawn than York's character;—his religious loyalty struggling with a deep grief and indignation at the king's follies; his adherence to his word and faith, once given in spite of all, even the most natural, feelings. You see in him the weakness of old age, and the overwhelmingness of circumstances, for a time surmounting his sense of duty,—the junction of both exhibited in his boldness in words and feebleness in immediate act; and then again his effort to retrieve himself in abstract loyalty, even at the heavy price of the loss of his son. This species of accidental and adventitious weakness is brought into parallel with Richard's continually increasing energy of thought, and as constantly diminishing power of acting;—

and thus it is Richard that breathes a harmony and a relation into all the characters of the play.

Ib. sc. 2.

"*Queen.* To please the king I did; to please myself
I cannot do it; yet I know no cause
Why I should welcome such a guest as grief,
Save bidding farewell to so sweet a guest
As my sweet Richard: yet again, methinks,
Some unborn sorrow, ripe in sorrow's womb,
Is coming toward me; and my inward soul
With nothing trembles: at something it grieves,
More than with parting from my lord the king."

It is clear that Shakspere never meant to represent Richard as a vulgar debauchee, but a man with a wantonness of spirit in external show, a feminine *friendism*, an intensity of woman-like love of those immediately about him, and a mistaking of the delight of being loved by him for a love of him. And mark in this scene Shakspere's gentleness in touching the tender superstitions, the *terræ incognitæ* of presentiments, in the human mind: and how sharp a line of distinction he commonly draws between these obscure forecastings of general experience in each individual, and the vulgar errors of mere tradition. Indeed, it may be taken once for all as the truth, that Shakspere, in the absolute universality of his genius, always reverences whatever arises out of our moral nature; he never profanes his muse with a contemptuous reasoning away of the genuine and general, however unaccountable, feelings of mankind.

The amiable part of Richard's character is brought full upon us by his queen's few words—

". . . . so sweet a guest
As my sweet Richard;—"

and Shakspere has carefully shown in him an intense love of his country, well knowing how that feeling would, in a

pure historic drama, redeem him in the hearts of the audience. Yet even in this love there is something feminine and personal:—

> "Dear earth, I do salute thee with my hand,—
> As a long parted mother with her child
> Plays fondly with her tears, and smiles in meeting;
> So weeping, smiling, greet I thee, my earth,
> And do thee favour[1] with my royal hands."

With this is combined a constant overflow of emotions from a total incapability of controlling them, and thence a waste of that energy, which should have been reserved for actions, in the passion and effort of mere resolves and menaces. The consequence is moral exhaustion, and rapid alternations of unmanly despair and ungrounded hope,—every feeling being abandoned for its direct opposite upon the pressure of external accident. And yet when Richard's inward weakness appears to seek refuge in his despair, and his exhaustion counterfeits repose, the old habit of [illegible]ss, the effect of flatterers from his infancy, is ever [illegible]non producing in him a sort of wordy courage which only serves to betray more clearly his internal im[illegible]nce. The second and third scenes of the third a[illegible]bine and illustrate all this:—

> "*Aumerle.* He means, my lord, that we are t[illegible]
> Whilst Bolingbroke, through our security,
> Grows strong and great in substance, and in friends.
> *K. Rich.* Discomfortable cousin! know'st thou not,
> That when the searching eye of heaven is hid
> Behind the globe, and[2] lights the lower world,
> Then thieves and robbers range abroad unseen,

---

[1] So, 1st Fol. 1623. The Globe Edition reads "favours."

[2] For "and" read "that." Retain "bloody;" though later editions read "boldly," and the Globe Edition adopts it. The 1st Folio has "that" and "bloody." It is right. If the passage is read with strong emphasis on *that*, *lower*, and *here*, it will become plain.

In murders and in outrage, bloody here;
But when, from under this terrestrial ball,
He fires the proud tops of the eastern pines,
And darts his light through every guilty hole,
Then murders, treasons, and detested sins,
The cloak of night being pluckt from off their backs,
Stand bare and naked, trembling at themselves?
So when this thief, this traitor, Bolingbroke," &c.

* * * * *

"*Aumerle.* Where is the Duke my father with his power?
K. Rich. No matter where; of comfort no man speak:
Let's talk of graves, of worms, and epitaphs,
Make dust our paper, and with rainy eyes
Write sorrow on the bosom of the earth," &c.

* * * * *

"*Aumerle.* My father hath a power, enquire of him;
And learn to make a body of a limb.
K. Rich. Thou chid'st me well: proud Bolingbroke, I come,
To change blows with thee for our day of doom.
This ague-fit of fear is over-blown;
An easy task it is to win our own."

* * * * *

"*Sc*[illegible] our uncle York hath[1] joined with Bolingbroke.—"

* * * * *

"*K. Rich.* Thou hast said enough.
[illegible]ow thee, cousin, which didst lead me forth
[illegible] sweet way I was in to despair!
[illegible] you now? what comfort have we now?
By [illegible] I'll hate him everlastingly,
That [illegible] of comfort any more."

* * * * *

Act iii. sc. 3. Bolingbroke's speech:—

"Noble lord,[2]
Go to the rude ribs of that ancient castle," &c.

Observe the fine struggle of a haughty sense of power and ambition in Bolingbroke with the necessity for dissimulation.

[1] Read "is."
[2] So 1st Fol. Globe Ed., "lords."

Ib. sc. 4. See here the skill and judgment of our poet in giving reality and individual life, by the introduction of accidents in his historic plays, and thereby making them dramas, and not histories. How beautiful an islet of repose—a melancholy repose, indeed—is this scene with the Gardener and his Servant. And how truly affecting and realizing is the incident of the very horse Barbary, in the scene with the Groom in the last act!—

"*Groom.* I was a poor groom of thy stable, King,
When thou wert King; who, travelling towards York,
With much ado, at length have gotten leave
To look upon my sometime master's face.[1]
O, how it yearn'd my heart, when I beheld,
In London streets, that coronation day,
When Bolingbroke rode on roan Barbary!
That horse, that thou so often hast bestrid;
That horse, that I so carefully have dress'd!
K. Rich. Rode he on Barbary?"

Bolingbroke's character, in general, is an instance how Shakspere makes one play introductory to another; for it is evidently a preparation for "Henry IV.," as Gloster in the third part of "Henry VI." is for "Richard III."

I would once more remark upon the exalted idea of the only true loyalty developed in this noble and impressive play. We have neither the rants of Beaumont and Fletcher, nor the sneers of Massinger;—the vast importance of the personal character of the sovereign is distinctly enounced, whilst, at the same time, the genuine sanctity which surrounds him is attributed to, and grounded on, the position in which he stands as the convergence and exponent of the life and power of the state.

The great end of the body politic appears to be to

[1] The 1st Fol. has—

"To look upon my (sometimes Royall) master's face."

Doubtless, the Groom said "royal," and some critic substituted "sometimes royal." The Globe Edition retains the alteration, omitting the brackets.

humanize, and assist in the progressiveness of, the animal man;—but the problem is so complicated with contingencies as to render it nearly impossible to lay down rules for the formation of a state. And should we be able to form a system of government, which should so balance its different powers as to form a check upon each, and so continually remedy and correct itself, it would, nevertheless, defeat its own aim;—for man is destined to be guided by higher principles, by universal views, which can never be fulfilled in this state of existence,—by a spirit of progressiveness which can never be accomplished, for then it would cease to be. Plato's Republic is like Bunyan's Town of Man-Soul,—a description of an individual, all of whose faculties are in their proper subordination and inter-dependence; and this it is assumed may be the prototype of the state as one great individual. But there is this sophism in it, that it is forgotten that the human faculties, indeed, are parts and not separate things: but that you could never get chiefs who were wholly reason, ministers who were wholly understanding, soldiers all wrath, labourers all concupiscence, and so on through the rest. Each of these partakes of, and interferes with, all the others.

Henry IV. Part I.

Act i. sc 1. King Henry's speech:

> "No more the thirsty entrance of this soil
> Shall dank her lips with her own children's blood."

A most obscure passage: but I think Theobald's interpretation right, namely, that "thirsty entrance" means the dry penetrability, or bibulous drought, of the soil. The obscurity of this passage is of the Shaksperian sort.

Ib. sc. 2. In this, the first introduction of Falstaff, observe the consciousness and the intentionality of his wit, so that when it does not flow of its own accord, its absence

is felt, and an effort visibly made to recall it. Note also throughout how Falstaff's pride is gratified in the power of influencing a prince of the blood, the heir apparent, by means of it. Hence his dislike to Prince John of Lancaster, and his mortification when he finds his wit fail on him:—

"*P. John.* Fare you well, Falstaff; I, in my condition,
Shall better speak of you than you deserve.
Fal. I would you had but the wit; 'twere better than your dukedom. —Good faith, this same young sober-blooded boy doth not love me;—nor a man cannot make him laugh."

Act ii. sc. 1. Second Carrier's speech:—

". . . . breeds fleas like a *loach*."[1]

Perhaps it is a misprint, or a provincial pronunciation, for "leach," that is, blood-suckers. Had it been gnats, instead of fleas, there might have been some sense, though small probability, in Warburton's suggestion of the Scottish "loch." Possibly "loach," or "lutch," may be some lost word for dovecote, or poultry-lodge, notorious for breeding fleas. In Stevens's or my reading, it should properly be "loaches," or "leeches," in the plural; except that I think I have heard anglers speak of trouts like *a* salmon.

Act iii. sc. 1.

"*Glend.* *Nay*, if you melt, then will she run mad."

This "nay" so to be dwelt on in speaking, as to be equivalent to a dissyllable — ∪, is characteristic of the solemn Glendower: but the imperfect line—

"*She bids you*
Upon[2] the wanton rushes lay you down," &c.

is one of those fine hair-strokes of exquisite judgment

[1] "*Loach*, A small fish." "It seems as reasonable to suppose the *loach* infested with fleas as the tench, which may be meant in a preceding speech."—*Nares' Glossary*, q. v.

[2] Read "on." Fol. 1623.

peculiar to Shakspere:—thus detaching the lady's speech, and giving it the individuality and entireness of a little poem, while he draws attention to it.

Henry IV. Part II.

Act ii. sc. 2.

"*P. Hen.* Sup any women with him?

Page. None, my lord, but old mistress Quickly, and mistress Doll Tear-sheet."

* * * * * *

"*P. Hen.* This Doll Tear-sheet should be some road."

I am sometimes disposed to think that this respectable young lady's name is a very old corruption for Tear-street —street-walker, *terere stratam (viam)*. Does not the Prince's question rather show this?—

"This Doll Tear-street should be some road?"

Act iii. sc. 1. King Henry's speech:

". . . . Then, *happy low, lie down;*
Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown."

I know no argument by which to persuade any one to be of my opinion, or rather of my feeling: but yet I cannot help feeling that "Happy low-lie-down!" is either a proverbial expression, or the burthen of some old song, and means, "Happy the man, who lays himself down on his straw bed or chaff pallet on the ground or floor!"

Ib. sc. 2. Shallow's speech:—

"*Bah, tah, tah,* would 'a say; *bounce,* would 'a say," &c.

That Beaumont and Fletcher have more than once been guilty of sneering at their great master, cannot, I fear, be denied; but the passage quoted by Theobald from the "Knight of the Burning Pestle" is an imitation. If it be

chargeable with any fault, it is with plagiarism, not with sarcasm.

Henry V.

Act i. sc. 2. Westmoreland's speech:—

> "They know your *grace* hath cause, and means, and might;
> So hath your *highness*; never King of England
> Had nobles richer," &c.

Does "grace" mean the king's own peculiar domains and legal revenue, and "highness" his feudal rights in the military service of his nobles?—I have sometimes thought it possible that the words "grace" and "cause" may have been transposed in the copying or printing;—

> "They know your cause hath grace," &c.

What Theobald meant, I cannot guess. To me his pointing makes the passage still more obscure. Perhaps the lines ought to be recited dramatically thus:—

> "They know your Grace hath cause, and means, and might:—
> So *hath* your Highness—never King of England
> *Had* nobles richer," &c.

He breaks off from the grammar and natural order from earnestness, and in order to give the meaning more passionately.

Ib. Exeter's speech:—

> "Yet that is but a *crush'd* necessity."

Perhaps it may be "crash" for "crass" from *crassus* clumsy; or it may be "curt," defective, imperfect: anything would be better than Warburton's "'scus'd," which honest Theobald, of course, adopts. By the bye, it seems clear to me that this speech of Exeter's properly belongs to Canterbury, and was altered by the actors for convenience.

Act iv. sc. 3. K. Henry's speech:—

"We would not *die* in that man's company
That fears his fellowship to die with us."

Should it not be "live" in the first line?

Ib. sc. 5.

"*Const.* *O diable!*
Orl. *O seigneur! le jour est perdu, tout est perdu!*
Dau. *Mort de ma vie!* all is confounded, all!
Reproach and everlasting shame
Sit mocking in our plumes!—*O meschante fortune!*
Do not run away!"

Ludicrous as these introductory scraps of French appear, so instantly followed by good, nervous mother-English, yet they are judicious, and produce the impression which Shakspere intended,—a sudden feeling struck at once on the ears, as well as the eyes, of the audience, that "here come the French, the baffled French braggards!"—And this will appear still more judicious, when we reflect on the scanty apparatus of distinguishing dresses in Shakspere's tiring-room.

Henry VI. Part I.

Act i. sc. 1. Bedford's speech:—

"Hung be the heavens with black, yield day to night!
Comets, importing change of times and states,
Brandish your crystal tresses in the sky;
And with them scourge the bad revolting stars
That have consented unto Henry's death!
Henry[1] the fifth, too famous to live long!
England ne'er lost a king of so much worth."

Read aloud any two or three passages in blank verse even from Shakspere's earliest dramas, as "Love's Labour's Lost," or "Romeo and Juliet;" and then read in the same way this speech, with especial attention to the metre; and

[1] Read "King Henry."

if you do not feel the impossibility of the latter having been written by Shakspere,[1] all I dare suggest is, that you may have ears,—for so has another animal,—but an ear you cannot have, *me judice*.

Richard III.

This play should be contrasted with "Richard II." Pride of intellect is the characteristic of Richard, carried to the extent of even boasting to his own mind of his villany, whilst others are present to feed his pride of superiority; as in his first speech, act II. sc. 1. Shakspere here, as in all his great parts, developes in a tone of sublime morality the dreadful consequences of placing the moral in subordination to the mere intellectual being. In Richard there is a predominance of irony, accompanied with apparently blunt manners to those immediately about him, but formalized into a more set hypocrisy towards the people as represented by their magistrates.

[1] See Prof. Dowden's Arrangement of the Plays, Section II., where "Henry VI." is found in the "Pre-Shaksperian Group."

SECTION IV.

NOTES ON SOME OTHER PLAYS OF SHAKSPERE.

The Tempest.

THERE is a sort of improbability with which we are shocked in dramatic representation, not less than in a narrative of real life. Consequently, there must be rules respecting it; and as rules are nothing but means to an end previously ascertained—(inattention to which simple truth has been the occasion of all the pedantry of the French school),—we must first determine what the immediate end or object of the drama is. And here, as I have previously remarked, I find two extremes of critical decision;—the French, which evidently presupposes that a perfect delusion is to be aimed at,—an opinion which needs no fresh confutation; and the exact opposite to it, brought forward by Dr. Johnson, who supposes the auditors throughout in the full reflective knowledge of the contrary. In evincing the impossibility of delusion, he makes no sufficient allowance for an intermediate state, which I have before distinguished by the term, illusion, and have attempted to illustrate its quality and character by reference to our mental state, when dreaming. In both cases we simply do not judge the imagery to be unreal; there is a negative reality, and no more. Whatever, therefore, tends to prevent the mind from placing itself, or being placed, gradually in that state in which the images have

such negative reality for the auditor, destroys this illusion, and is dramatically improbable.

Now the production of this effect—a sense of improbability—will depend on the degree of excitement in which the mind is supposed to be. Many things would be intolerable in the first scene of a play, that would not at all interrupt our enjoyment in the height of the interest, when the narrow cockpit may be made to hold

> "The vasty field of France, or we may cram
> Within its wooden O the very casques,
> That did affright the air at Agincourt."

Again, on the other hand, many obvious improbabilities will be endured, as belonging to the ground-work of the story rather than to the drama itself, in the first scenes, which would disturb or disentrance us from all illusion in the acme of our excitement; as for instance, Lear's division of his kingdom, and the banishment of Cordelia.

But, although the other excellencies of the drama besides this dramatic probability, as unity of interest, with distinctness and subordination of the characters, and appropriateness of style, are all, so far as they tend to increase the inward excitement, means towards accomplishing the chief end, that of producing and supporting this willing illusion, —yet they do not on that account cease to be ends themselves; and we must remember that, as such, they carry their own justification with them, as long as they do not contravene or interrupt the total illusion. It is not even always, or of necessity, an objection to them, that they prevent the illusion from rising to as great a height as it might otherwise have attained;—it is enough that they are simply compatible with as high a degree of it as is requisite for the purpose. Nay, upon particular occasions, a palpable improbability may be hazarded by a great genius for the express purpose of keeping down the interest of a

merely instrumental scene, which would otherwise make too great an impression for the harmony of the entire illusion. Had the panorama been invented in the time of Pope Leo X., Raffael would still, I doubt not, have smiled in contempt at the regret, that the broom-twigs and scrubby bushes at the back of some of his grand pictures were not as probable trees as those in the exhibition.

The "Tempest" is a specimen of the purely romantic drama, in which the interest is not historical, or dependent upon fidelity of portraiture, or the natural connection of events,—but is a birth of the imagination, and rests only on the coaptation and union of the elements granted to, or assumed by, the poet. It is a species of drama which owes no allegiance to time or space, and in which, therefore, errors of chronology and geography—no mortal sins in any species—are venial faults, and count for nothing. It addresses itself entirely to the imaginative faculty; and although the illusion may be assisted by the effect on the senses of the complicated scenery and decorations of modern times, yet this sort of assistance is dangerous. For the principal and only genuine excitement ought to come from within,—from the moved and sympathetic imagination; whereas, where so much is addressed to the mere external senses of seeing and hearing, the spiritual vision is apt to languish, and the attraction from without will withdraw the mind from the proper and only legitimate interest which is intended to spring from within.

The romance opens with a busy scene admirably appropriate to the kind of drama, and giving, as it were, the key-note to the whole harmony. It prepares and initiates the excitement required for the entire piece, and yet does not demand anything from the spectators, which their previous habits had not fitted them to understand. It is the bustle of a tempest, from which the real horrors are abstracted;—therefore it is poetical, though not in strict-

ness natural—(the distinction to which I have so often alluded)—and is purposely restrained from concentering the interest on itself, but used merely as an induction or tuning for what is to follow.

In the second scene, Prospero's speeches, till the entrance of Ariel, contain the finest example I remember of retrospective narration for the purpose of exciting immediate interest, and putting the audience in possession of all the information necessary for the understanding of the plot.[1] Observe, too, the perfect probability of the moment chosen by Prospero (the very Shakspere himself, as it were, of the tempest) to open out the truth to his daughter, his own romantic bearing, and how completely anything that might have been disagreeable to us in the magician, is reconciled and shaded in the humanity and natural feelings of the father. In the very first speech of Miranda the simplicity and tenderness of her character are at once laid open; it would have been lost in direct contact with the agitation of the first scene. The opinion once prevailed, but, happily, is now abandoned, that Fletcher alone wrote for women;[2]—the truth is, that with very few, and those partial, exceptions, the female characters in the plays of Beaumont and Fletcher are, when of the light kind, not

[1] "*Pro.* Mark his condition, and th' event; then tell me,
If this might be a brother.
Mira. I should sin,
To think but nobly of my grandmother;
Good wombs have bore bad sons.
Pro. Now the condition." &c.

Theobald has a note upon this passage, and suggests that Shakspere placed it thus:—

"*Pro.* Good wombs have bore bad sons,—
Now the condition."

Mr. Coleridge writes in the margin: "I cannot but believe that Theobald is quite right."—H. N. C.

[2] See conclusion of Lecture VI., 1811-12.

decent; when heroic, complete viragos. But in Shakspere all the elements of womanhood are holy, and there is the sweet, yet dignified feeling of all that *continuates* society, as sense of ancestry and of sex, with a purity unassailable by sophistry, because it rests not in the analytic processes, but in that sane equipoise of the faculties, during which the feelings are representative of all past experience,—not of the individual only, but of all those by whom she has been educated, and their predecessors even up to the first mother that lived. Shakspere saw that the want of prominence, which Pope notices for sarcasm,[1] was the blessed beauty of the woman's character, and knew that it arose not from any deficiency, but from the more exquisite harmony of all the parts of the moral being constituting one living total of head and heart. He has drawn it, indeed, in all its distinctive energies of faith, patience, constancy, fortitude,—shown in all of them as following the heart, which gives its results by a nice tact and happy intuition, without the intervention of the discursive faculty —sees all things in and by the light of the affections, and errs, if it ever err, in the exaggerations of love alone. In all the Shaksperian women there is essentially the same foundation and principle; the distinct individuality and variety are merely the result of the modification of circumstances, whether in Miranda the maiden, in Imogen the wife, or in Katharine the queen.

But to return. The appearance and characters of the super or ultra-natural servants are finely contrasted. Ariel has in everything the airy tint which gives the name; and it is worthy of remark that Miranda is never directly brought into comparison with Ariel, lest the natural and human of the one and the supernatural of the other should tend to neutralize each other; Caliban, on the other hand,

[1] See Appendix: V.; "Table Talk," *Sep.* 27, 1830.

is all earth, all condensed and gross in feelings and images; he has the dawnings of understanding without reason or the moral sense, and in him, as in some brute animals, this advance to the intellectual faculties, without the moral sense, is marked by the appearance of vice. For it is in the primacy of the moral being only that man is truly human; in his intellectual powers he is certainly approached by the brutes, and, man's whole system duly considered, those powers cannot be considered other than means to an end, that is, to morality.

In this scene, as it proceeds, is displayed the impression made by Ferdinand and Miranda on each other; it is love at first sight;—

> "at the first sight
> They have changed eyes:"—

and it appears to me, that in all cases of real love, it is at one moment that it takes place. That moment may have been prepared by previous esteem, admiration, or even affection,—yet love seems to require a momentary act of volition, by which a tacit bond of devotion is imposed,—a bond, not to be thereafter broken without violating what should be sacred in our nature. How finely is the true Shaksperian scene contrasted with Dryden's vulgar alteration of it, in which a mere ludicrous psychological experiment, as it were, is tried—displaying nothing but indelicacy without passion. Prospero's interruption of the courtship has often seemed to me to have no sufficient motive; still his alleged reason—

> "lest too light winning
> Make the prize light"—

is enough for the ethereal connections of the romantic imagination, although it would not be so for the historical.[1]

[1] "*Fer.* Yes, faith, and all his Lords, the Duke of Milan,
And his brave son, being twain."

The whole courting scene, indeed, in the beginning of the third act, between the lovers is a masterpiece; and the first dawn of disobedience in the mind of Miranda to the command of her father is very finely drawn, so as to seem the working of the Scriptural command, *Thou shalt leave father and mother*, &c. O! with what exquisite purity this scene is conceived and executed! Shakspere may sometimes be gross, but I boldly say that he is always moral and modest. Alas! in this our day decency of manners is preserved at the expense of morality of heart, and delicacies for vice are allowed, whilst grossness against it is hypocritically, or at least morbidly, condemned.

In this play are admirably sketched the vices generally accompanying a low degree of civilization; and in the first scene of the second act Shakspere has, as in many other places, shown the tendency in bad men to indulge in scorn and contemptuous expressions, as a mode of getting rid of their own uneasy feelings of inferiority to the good, and also, by making the good ridiculous, of rendering the transition of others to wickedness easy. Shakspere never puts habitual scorn into the mouths of other than bad men, as here in the instances of Antonio and Sebastian.[1] The scene of the intended assassination of Alonzo and Gonzalo is the exact counterpart of the scene between Macbeth and his lady, only pitched in a lower key throughout, as designed to be frustrated and concealed, and exhibiting the

Theobald remarks that nobody was lost in the wreck; and yet that no such character is introduced in the fable, as the Duke of Milan's son. Mr. C. notes: "Must not Ferdinand have believed he was lost in the fleet that the tempest scattered?"—H. N. C.

[1] "Observe the fine humanity of Shakspere in that his sneerers are all worthless villains. Too cunning to attach value to *self-praise*, and unable to obtain approval from those whom they are compelled to respect, they propitiate their own *self-love* by disparaging and lowering others."—S. T. C. in "Allsop's Recollections." See notes on "Othello," Act. ii. sc. 1, and Appendix: V.; *Apr.* 5, 1833.

same profound management in the manner of familiarizing a mind, not immediately recipient, to the suggestion of guilt, by associating the proposed crime with something ludicrous or out of place,—something not habitually matter of reverence. By this kind of sophistry the imagination and fancy are first bribed to contemplate the suggested act, and at length to become acquainted with it. Observe how the effect of this scene is heightened by contrast with another counterpart of it in low life,—that between the conspirators Stephano, Caliban, and Trinculo in the second scene of the third act, in which there are the same essential characteristics.

In this play and in this scene of it are also shown the springs of the vulgar in politics,—of that kind of politics which is inwoven with human nature. In his treatment of this subject, wherever it occurs, Shakspere is quite peculiar. In other writers we find the particular opinions of the individual: in Massinger it is rank republicanism; in Beaumont and Fletcher even *jure divino* principles are carried to excess;—but Shakspere never promulgates any party tenets. He is always the philosopher and the moralist, but at the same time with a profound veneration for all the established institutions of society, and for those classes which form the permanent elements of the state—especially never introducing a professional character, as such, otherwise than as respectable. If he must have any name, he should be styled a philosophical aristocrat.[1] de-

[1] May we venture to put just one piece of new cloth on an old garment?

"Then always, and, of course, as the superbest, poetic culmination-expression of Feudalism, the Shaksperian dramas, in the attitudes, dialogue, characters, &c., of the princes, lords and gentlemen, the pervading atmosphere, the implied and expressed standard of manners, the high port and proud stomach, the regal embroidery of style, &c."—Walt Whitman, "Democratic Vistas," 1870.

lighting in those hereditary institutions which have a tendency to bind one age to another, and in that distinction of ranks, of which, although few may be in possession, all enjoy the advantages. Hence, again, you will observe the good nature with which he seems always to make sport with the passions and follies of a mob, as with an irrational animal.[1] He is never angry with it, but hugely content with holding up its absurdities to its face; and sometimes you may trace a tone of almost affectionate superiority, something like that in which a father speaks of the roguery of a child. See the good-humoured way in which he describes Stephano passing from the most licentious freedom to absolute despotism over Trinculo and Caliban. The truth is, Shakspere's characters are all *genera* intensely individualized; the results of meditation, of which observation supplied the drapery and the colours necessary to combine them with each other. He had virtually surveyed all the great component powers and impulses of human nature,—had seen that their different combinations and subordinations were in fact the individualizers of men, and showed how their harmony was produced by reciprocal disproportions of excess or deficiency. The language in which these truths are expressed was not drawn from any set fashion, but from the profoundest depths of his moral being, and is therefore for all ages.

Love's Labour's Lost.

The characters in this play are either impersonated out of Shakspere's own multiformity by imaginative self-position, or out of such as a country town and a school-boy's observation might supply,—the curate, the school-

1. "Shakspere's evenness and sweetness of temper were almost proverbial in his own age."—*Biographia Literaria*, chap. ii.

master, the Armado (who even in my time was not extinct in the cheaper inns of North Wales), and so on. The satire is chiefly on follies of words. Biron and Rosaline are evidently the pre-existent state of Benedick and Beatrice, and so, perhaps, is Boyet of Lafeu, and Costard of the Tapster in "Measure for Measure;" and the frequency of the rhymes, the sweetness as well as the smoothness of the metre, and the number of acute and fancifully illustrated aphorisms, are all as they ought to be in a poet's youth. True genius begins by generalizing and condensing; it ends in realizing and expanding. It first collects the seeds.

Yet if this juvenile drama had been the only one extant of our Shakspere, and we possessed the tradition only of his riper works, or accounts of them in writers who had not even mentioned this play,—how many of Shakspere's characteristic features might we not still have discovered in "Love's Labour's Lost," though as in a portrait taken of him in his boyhood.

I can never sufficiently admire the wonderful activity of thought throughout the whole of the first scene of the play, rendered natural, as it is, by the choice of the characters, and the whimsical determination on which the drama is founded. A whimsical determination certainly;—yet not altogether so very improbable to those who are conversant in the history of the middle ages, with their Courts of Love, and all that lighter drapery of chivalry, which engaged even mighty kings with a sort of serio-comic interest, and may well be supposed to have occupied more completely the smaller princes, at a time when the noble's or prince's court contained the only theatre of the domain or principality. This sort of story, too, was admirably suited to Shakspere's times, when the English court was still the foster-mother of the state and the muses; and when, in consequence, the courtiers, and men of rank and

fashion, affected a display of wit, point, and sententious observation, that would be deemed intolerable at present,—but in which a hundred years of controversy, involving every great political, and every dear domestic, interest, had trained all but the lowest classes to participate. Add to this the very style of the sermons of the time, and the eagerness of the Protestants to distinguish themselves by long and frequent preaching, and it will be found that, from the reign of Henry VIII. to the abdication of James II. no country ever received such a national education as England.

Hence the comic matter chosen in the first instance is a ridiculous imitation or apery of this constant striving after logical precision, and subtle opposition of thoughts, together with a making the most of every conception or image, by expressing it under the least expected property belonging to it, and this, again, rendered specially absurd by being applied to the most current subjects and occurrences. The phrases and modes of combination in argument were caught by the most ignorant from the custom of the age, and their ridiculous misapplication of them is most amusingly exhibited in Costard; whilst examples suited only to the gravest propositions and impersonations, or apostrophes to abstract thoughts impersonated, which are in fact the natural language only of the most vehement agitations of the mind, are adopted by the coxcombry of Armado as mere artifices of ornament.

The same kind of intellectual action is exhibited in a more serious and elevated strain in many other parts of this play. Biron's speech at the end of the fourth act is an excellent specimen of it. It is logic clothed in rhetoric;—but observe how Shakspere, in his two-fold being of poet and philosopher, avails himself of it to convey profound truths in the most lively images,—the whole remaining faithful to the character supposed to utter the lines,

and the expressions themselves constituting a further development of that character:—

"Other slow arts entirely keep the brain:
And therefore finding barren practisers,
Scarce shew a harvest of their heavy toil:
But love, first learned in a lady's eyes,
Lives not alone immured in the brain;
But, with the motion of all elements,
Courses as swift as thought in every power;
And gives to every power a double power,
Above their functions and their offices.
It adds a precious seeing to the eye,
A lover's eyes will gaze an eagle blind;
A lover's ear will hear the lowest sound,
When the suspicious tread of theft is stopp'd:
Love's feeling is more soft and sensible,
Than are the tender horns of cocked snails;
Love's tongue proves dainty Bacchus gross in taste;
For valour, is not love a Hercules,
Still climbing trees in the Hesperides?
Subtle as Sphinx; as sweet and musical
As bright Apollo's lute, strung with his hair;
And when love speaks, the voice of all the gods
Makes[2] heaven drowsy with the harmony.
Never durst poet touch a pen to write,
Until his ink were temper'd with love's sighs;
O, then his lines would ravish savage ears,
And plant in tyrants mild humility.
From women's eyes this doctrine I derive:
They sparkle still the right Promethean fire;
They are the books, the arts, the academes,
That shew, contain, and nourish all the world;
Else, none at all in aught proves excellent.
Then fools you were these women to forswear;
Or, keeping what is sworn, you will prove fools.
For wisdom's sake, a word that all men love;
Or for love's sake, a word that loves all men;
Or for men's sake, the authors of these women;

1 "And musical as is Apollo's Lute."—Milton's "Comus," 478.
2 "Make," 1st Fol.

Or women's sake, by whom we men are men;
Let us once lose our oaths, to find ourselves,
Or else we lose ourselves to keep our oaths:
It is religion, to be thus forsworn:
For charity itself fulfils the law:
And who can sever love from charity?"—

This is quite a study;—sometimes you see this youthful god of poetry connecting disparate thoughts purely by means of resemblances in the words expressing them,—a thing in character in lighter comedy, especially of that kind in which Shakspere delights, namely, the purposed display of wit, though sometimes, too, disfiguring his graver scenes;—but more often you may see him doubling the natural connection or order of logical consequence in the thoughts by the introduction of an artificial and sought for resemblance in the words, as, for instance, in the third line of the play,—

"And then grace us in the disgrace of death;"[1]—

this being a figure often having its force and propriety, as justified by the law of passion, which, inducing in the mind an unusual activity, seeks for means to waste its superfluity,—when in the highest degree—in lyric repetitions and sublime tautology—(*at her feet he bowed, he fell, he lay down; at her feet he bowed, he fell; where he bowed, there he fell down dead*),—and, in lower degrees, in making the words themselves the subjects and materials of that surplus action, and for the same cause that agitates our limbs, and forces our very gestures into a tempest in states of high excitement.

[1] See "Richard II.," quoted in Lecture XII., in the Lectures of 1811-12:

"Take not, good cousin, farther than you should,
Lest you mistake;"

and the poem in Lecture IX., assigned to Milton:

"By a crab-like way
Time past made pastime."

The mere style of narration in "Love's Labour's Lost," like that of Ægeon in the first scene of the "Comedy of Errors," and of the Captain in the second scene of "Macbeth," seems imitated with its defects and its beauties from Sir Philip Sidney; whose "Arcadia," though not then published, was already well known in manuscript copies, and could hardly have escaped the notice and admiration of Shakspere as the friend and client of the Earl of Southampton. The chief defect consists in the parentheses and parenthetic thoughts and descriptions, suited neither to the passion of the speaker, nor the purpose of the person to whom the information is to be given, but manifestly betraying the author himself,—not by way of continuous undersong, but —palpably, and so as to show themselves addressed to the general reader. However, it is not unimportant to notice how strong a presumption the diction and allusions of this play afford, that, though Shakspere's acquirements in the dead languages might not be such as we suppose in a learned education, his habits had, nevertheless, been scholastic, and those of a student. For a young author's first work almost always bespeaks his recent pursuits, and his first observations of life are either drawn from the immediate employments of his youth, and from the characters and images most deeply impressed on his mind in the situations in which those employments had placed him; —or else they are fixed on such objects and occurrences in the world, as are easily connected with, and seem to bear upon, his studies and the hitherto exclusive subjects of his meditation. Just as Ben Jonson, who applied himself to the drama after having served in Flanders, fills his earliest plays with true or pretended soldiers, the wrongs and neglects of the former, and the absurd boasts and knavery of their counterfeits. So Lessing's first comedies are placed in the universities, and consist of events and characters conceivable in an academic life.

I will only further remark the sweet and tempered gravity, with which Shakspere in the end draws the only fitting moral which such a drama afforded. Here Rosaline rises up to the full height of Beatrice:—

"*Ros.* Oft have I heard of you, my lord Biron,
Before I saw you, and the world's large tongue
Proclaims you for a man replete with mocks;
Full of comparisons, and wounding flouts,
Which you on all estates will execute
That lie within the mercy of your wit:
To weed this wormwood from your fruitful brain,
And therewithal, to win me, if you please,
(Without the which I am not to be won,)
You shall this twelvemonth term from day to day
Visit the speechless sick, and still converse
With groaning wretches; and your talk[1] shall be,
With all the fierce endeavour of your wit,
To enforce the pained impotent to smile.
Biron. To move wild laughter in the throat of death?
It cannot be; it is impossible;
Mirth cannot move a soul in agony.
Ros. Why, that's the way to choke a gibing spirit,
Whose influence is begot of that loose grace,
Which shallow laughing hearers give to fools:
A jest's prosperity lies in the ear
Of him that hears it, never in the tongue
Of him that makes it; then, if sickly ears,
Deaf'd with the clamors of their own dear groans,
Will hear your idle scorns, continue then,
And I will have you, and that fault withal;
But, if they will not, throw away that spirit,
And I shall find you empty of that fault,
Right joyful of your reformation."

Act v. sc. 2. In Biron's speech to the Princess:

—and, therefore, like the eye,
Full of *straying*[2] shapes, of habits, and of forms—

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[1] Read "task."

[2] So, 1st Fol. The Globe Shak. reads "strange." We quote the Globe edition of Shakspere, as a fair average indication of the conclusions at which modern criticism has arrived

Either read *stray*, which I prefer; or throw *full* back to the preceding lines,—

"like the eye, full
Of straying shapes," &c.

In the same scene:

"*Biron.* And what to me, my love? and what to me?
Ros. You must be purged too, your sins are rank;[1]
You are attaint with fault[2] and perjury:
Therefore, if you my favour mean to get,
A twelvemonth shall you spend, and never rest,
But seek the weary beds of people sick."

There can be no doubt, indeed, about the propriety of expunging this speech of Rosaline's; it soils the very page that retains it. But I do not agree with Warburton and others in striking out the preceding line also. It is quite in Biron's character; and Rosaline not answering it immediately, Dumain takes up the question for him, and, after he and Longaville are answered, Biron, with evident propriety, says;—

"*Studies* my mistress?" &c.[3]

Midsummer Night's Dream.

Act. i. sc. 1.

"*Her.* O cross! too high to be enthrall'd to low—
Lys. Or else misgraffed, in respect of years;
Her. O spite! too old to be engaged to young—
Lys. Or else it stood upon the choice of friends;
Her. O hell! to chuse love by another's eye!"

There is no authority for any alteration;—but I never can

[1] "Rack'd," 1st Fol. and Globe Ed.
[2] "Faults," 1st Fol. and Globe Ed.
[3] Read
"Studies, my lady? Mistress, look on me."

help feeling how great an improvement it would be, if the two former of Hermia's exclamations were omitted;—the third and only appropriate one would then become a beauty, and most natural.

Ib. Helena's speech:—

"I will go tell him of fair Hermia's flight," &c.

I am convinced that Shakspere availed himself of the title of this play in his own mind, and worked upon it as a dream throughout, but especially, and, perhaps, unpleasingly, in this broad determination of ungrateful treachery in Helena, so undisguisedly avowed to herself, and this, too, after the witty cool philosophizing that precedes. The act itself is natural, and the resolve so to act is, I fear, likewise too true a picture of the lax hold which principles have on a woman's heart, when opposed to, or even separated from, passion and inclination. For women are less hypocrites to their own minds than men are, because in general they feel less proportionate abhorrence of moral evil in and for itself, and more of its outward consequences, as detection, and loss of character, than men,—their natures being almost wholly extroitive. Still, however just in itself, the representation of this is not poetical; we shrink from it, and cannot harmonize it with the ideal.

Act ii. sc. 1. Theobald's edition.

Through bush, *through* briar—
* * * * * *
Through flood, *through* fire—

What a noble pair of ears this worthy Theobald must have had! The eight amphimacers or cretics,—

Ovĕr hĭll, ovĕr dāle,
Thōrŏ' bŭsh, thōrŏ' brĭar,
Ovĕr pārk, ovĕr pāle,
Thōrŏ' flood, thōrŏ' fire—

have a delightful effect on the ear in their sweet transition to the trochaic,—

I dŏ wănděr ĕv'ry whĕrĕ
Swĭftĕr, thăn thĕ mōonĕs sphĕrĕ, &c.—

The last words as sustaining the rhyme, must be considered, as in fact they are, trochees in time.

It may be worth while to give some correct examples in English of the principal metrical feet:—

Pyrrhic or Dibrach, ∪ ∪ = *bŏdў, spĭrĭt.*
Tribrach, ∪ ∪ ∪ = *nŏbŏdў*, hastily pronounced.
Iambus ∪ — = *dĕlīght.*
Trochee, — ∪ = *līghtlў.*
Spondee, — — = *Gōd spāke.*

The paucity of spondees in single words in English and, indeed, in the modern languages in general, makes, perhaps, the greatest distinction, metrically considered, between them and the Greek and Latin.

Dactyl, — ∪ ∪ = *mĕrrĭlў.*
Anapæst, ∪ ∪ — = *ă prŏpōs*, or the first three syllables of *cĕrĕmōny.*
Amphibrachys, ∪ — ∪ = *dĕlightfŭl.*
Amphimacer, — ∪ — = *ōvĕr hĭll.*
Antibacchius, ∪ — — = *thĕ Lōrd Gōd.*
Bacchius, — — ∪ = *Hĕbrĕllўn.*
Molossus, — — — = *John James Jones.*

These simple feet may suffice for understanding the metres of Shakspere, for the greater part at least;—but Milton cannot be made harmoniously intelligible without the composite feet, the Ionics, Pæons, and Epitrites.

Ib. Titania's speech:—(Theobald adopting Warburton's reading)

"Which she, with pretty and with swimming gait
Follying[1] (her womb then rich with my young squire)
Would imitate," &c.

Oh! oh! Heaven have mercy on poor Shakspere, and also on Mr. Warburton's mind's eye!

Act v. sc. 1. Theseus' speech:—(Theobald.)

"And what poor [*willing*] duty cannot do,[2]
Noble respect takes it in might, not merit."

To my ears it would read far more Shaksperian thus:—

"And what poor duty cannot do, *yet would*,
Noble respect," &c.

Ib. sc. 2.

"*Puck.* Now the hungry lion roars,
And the wolf behowls the moon;
Whilst the heavy ploughman snores
All with weary task foredone," &c.

Very Anacreon in perfectness, proportion, grace, and spontaneity! So far it is Greek;—but then add, O! what wealth, what wild ranging, and yet what compression and condensation of, English fancy! In truth, there is nothing in Anacreon more perfect than these thirty lines, or half so rich and imaginative. They form a speckless diamond.

Comedy of Errors.

The myriad-minded man, our, and all men's, Shakspere, has in this piece presented us with a legitimate farce in exactest consonance with the philosophical principles and character of farce, as distinguished from comedy and from

[1] For "following."

[2] 1st Fol. and Globe Ed.:—
"And what poor duty cannot do, noble respect
Takes it in might, not merit."

entertainments. A proper farce is mainly distinguished from comedy by the license allowed, and even required, in the fable, in order to produce strange and laughable situations. The story need not be probable, it is enough that it is possible. A comedy would scarcely allow even the two Antipholuses; because, although there have been instances of almost indistinguishable likeness in two persons, yet these are mere individual accidents, *casus ludentis naturæ*, and the *verum* will not excuse the *inverisimile*. But farce dares add the two Dromios, and is justified in so doing by the laws of its end and constitution. In a word, farces commence in a postulate, which must be granted.

As You Like It.

Act. i. sc. 1.

"*Oli.* What, boy!
Orla. Come, come, elder brother, you are too young in this.
Oli. Wilt thou lay hands on me, villain?"

There is a beauty here. The word "boy" naturally provokes and awakens in Orlando the sense of his manly powers; and with the retort of "elder brother," he grasps him with firm hands, and makes him feel he is no boy.

Ib.

"*Oli.* Farewell, good Charles.—Now will I stir this gamester: I hope, I shall see an end of him; for my soul, yet I know not why, hates nothing more than him.[1] Yet he's gentle; never school'd, and yet learn'd; full of noble device; of all sorts enchantingly beloved! and, indeed, so much in the heart of the world, and especially of my own people, who best know him, that I am altogether misprized: but it shall not be so long; this wrestler shall clear all."

This has always appeared to me one of the most un-

[1] An attempt to improve Shakspere's English. The correct text is "he."

Shaksperian speeches in all the genuine works of our poet; yet I should be nothing surprised, and greatly pleased, to find it hereafter a fresh beauty, as has so often happened to me with other supposed defects of great men. 1810.

It is too venturous to charge a passage in Shakspere with want of truth to nature; and yet at first sight this speech of Oliver's expresses truths, which it seems almost impossible that any mind should so distinctly, so livelily, and so voluntarily, have presented to itself, in connection with feelings and intentions so malignant, and so contrary to those which the qualities expressed would naturally have called forth. But I dare not say that this seeming unnaturalness is not in the nature of an abused wilfulness, when united with a strong intellect. In such characters there is sometimes a gloomy self-gratification in making the absoluteness of the will (*sit pro ratione voluntas!*) evident to themselves by setting the reason and the conscience in full array against it. 1818.

Ib. sc. 2.

"*Celia.* If you saw yourself with *your* eyes, or knew yourself with *your* judgment, the fear of your adventure would counsel you to a more equal enterprise."

Surely it should be "*our* eyes" and "*our* judgment."

Ib. sc. 3.

"*Cel.* But is all this for your father?
Ros. No, some of it is for *my child's father*."

Theobald restores this as the reading of the older editions. It may be so; but who can doubt that it is a mistake for "my father's child," meaning herself? According to Theobald's note, a most indelicate anticipation is put into the mouth of Rosalind without reason;—and besides, what a strange thought, and how out of place, and unintelligible!

Act iv. sc. 2.

"Take thou no scorn
To wear the horn, the lusty horn;
It was a crest ere thou wast born."

I question whether there exists a parallel instance of a phrase, that like this of "horns" is universal in all languages, and yet for which no one has discovered even a plausible origin.

Twelfth Night.

Act i. sc. 1. Duke's speech:—

"—so full of shapes *is* fancy,
That it alone is high fantastical."

Warburton's alteration of *is* into *in* is needless. "Fancy" may very well be interpreted "exclusive affection," or "passionate preference." Thus, bird-fanciers, gentlemen of the fancy, that is, amateurs of boxing, &c. The play of assimilation,—the meaning one sense chiefly, and yet keeping both senses in view, is perfectly Shaksperian.

Act. ii. sc. 3. Sir Andrew's speech:—

An explanatory note on *Pigrogromitus* would have been more acceptable than Theobald's grand discovery that "lemon" ought to be "leman."

Ib. Sir Toby's speech: (Warburton's note on the Peripatetic philosophy.)

"Shall we rouse the night-owl in a catch, that will draw three souls out of one weaver?"

O genuine, and inimitable (at least I hope so) Warburton! This note of thine, if but one in five millions, would be half a one too much.

Ib. sc. 4.

"*Duke.* My life upon't, young though thou art, thine eye
Hath stay'd upon some favour that it loves;
Hath it not, boy?

Vio. A little, by your favour.
Duke. What kind of woman is't?"

And yet Viola was to have been presented to Orsino as a eunuch!—Act i. sc. 2. Viola's speech. Either she forgot this, or else she had altered her plan.

Ib.

"*Vio.* A blank, my lord: she never told her love!—
But let concealment," &c.

After the first line (of which the last five words should be spoken with, and drop down in, a deep sigh) the actress ought to make a pause; and then start afresh, from the activity of thought, born of suppressed feelings, and which thought had accumulated during the brief interval, as vital heat under the skin during a dip in cold water.

Ib. sc. 5.

"*Fabian.* Though our silence be drawn from us by [1] *cars*, yet peace."

Perhaps, "cables."

Act. iii. sc. 1.

"*Clown.* A sentence is but a *cheveril* glove to a good wit." (Theobald's note.)

Theobald's etymology of "cheveril" is, of course, quite right;—but he is mistaken in supposing that there were no such things as gloves of chicken-skin. They were at one time a main article in chirocosmetics.

Act. v. sc. 1. Clown's speech:—

"So that, *conclusions to be as kisses*, if your four negatives make your two affirmatives, why, then, the worse for my friends, and the better for my foes."

(Warburton reads "conclusion to be asked, is.")

Surely Warburton could never have wooed by kisses and won, or he would not have flounder-flatted so just and humorous, nor less pleasing than humorous, an image into

[1] Read "with."

so profound a nihility. In the name of love and wonder, do not four kisses make a double affirmative? The humour lies in the whispered "No!" and the inviting "Don't!" with which the maiden's kisses are accompanied, and thence compared to negatives, which by repetition constitute an affirmative.

All's Well that Ends Well.

Act i. sc. 1.

"*Count.* If the living be enemy to the grief, the excess makes it soon mortal.

Bert. Madam, I desire your holy wishes.
Laf. How understand we that?"

Bertram and Lafeu, I imagine, both speak together,—Lafeu referring to the Countess's rather obscure remark.

Act ii. sc. 1. (Warburton's note.)

"*King.* — let *higher* Italy
(Those *'bated*, that inherit but the fall
Of the last monarchy) see, that you come
Not to woo honor, but to wed it."

It would be, I own, an audacious and unjustifiable change of the text; but yet, as a mere conjecture, I venture to suggest "bastards," for "'bated." As it stands, in spite of Warburton's note I can make little or nothing of it. Why should the king except the then most illustrious states, which, as being republics, were the more truly inheritors of the Roman grandeur?—With my conjecture, the sense would be;—"let higher, or the more northern part of Italy—(unless "higher" be a corruption for "hir'd,"—the metre seeming to demand a monosyllable) (those bastards that inherit the infamy only of their fathers) see, &c." The following "woo" and "wed" are so far confirmative as they indicate Shakspere's manner of

connection by unmarked influences of association from some preceding metaphor. This it is which makes his style so peculiarly vital and organic. Likewise "those girls of Italy" strengthens the guess. The absurdity of Warburton's gloss, which represents the king calling Italy superior, and then excepting the only part the lords were going to visit, must strike every one.

Ib. sc. 3.

"*Laf.* They say, miracles are past; and we have our philosophical persons to make modern and familiar, things supernatural and *causeless*."

Shakspere, inspired, as it might seem, with all knowledge, here uses the word "causeless" in its strict philosophical sense;—cause being truly predicable only of *phenomena*, that is, things natural, and not of *noumena*, or things supernatural.

Act. iii. sc. 5.

> "*Dia.* The Count Rousillon;—know you such a one?
> *Hel.* But by the ear that hears most nobly of him;
> His face I know not."

Shall we say here, that Shakspere has unnecessarily made his loveliest character utter a lie?—Or shall we dare think that, where to deceive was necessary, he thought a pretended verbal verity a double crime, equally with the other a lie to the hearer, and at the same time an attempt to lie to one's own conscience?

Merry Wives of Windsor.

Act i. sc. 1.

"*Shal.* The luce is the fresh fish, the salt fish is an old coat."

I cannot understand this. Perhaps there is a corruption both of words and speakers. Shallow no sooner corrects

one mistake of Sir Hugh's, namely, "louse" for "luce," a pike, but the honest Welchman falls into another, namely, "cod" (*baccalà*) *Cambrice* "cot" for coat.

"*Shal.* The luce is the fresh fish—
Evans. The salt fish is an old cot."

"Luce is a fresh fish, and not a louse;" says Shallow. "Aye, aye," quoth Sir Hugh; "the *fresh* fish is the luce; it is an old cod that is the salt fish." At all events, as the text stands, there is no sense at all in the words.

Ib. sc. 3.

"*Fal.* Now, the report goes, she has all the rule of her husband's purse; she[1] hath a legion of angels.
Pist. As many devils entertain; and *to her, boy*, say I."

Perhaps it is—

"As many devils enter (or enter'd) swine; and *to her, boy*, say I":—

a somewhat profane, but not un-Shaksperian allusion to the "legion" in St. Luke's "gospel."

Measure for Measure.

This play, which is Shakspere's throughout, is to me the most painful—say rather, the only painful—part of his genuine works. The comic and tragic parts equally border on the *μισητὸν*,—the one being disgusting, the other horrible; and the pardon and marriage of Angelo not merely baffles the strong indignant claim of justice—(for cruelty, with lust and damnable baseness, cannot be forgiven, because we cannot conceive them as being morally repented of;) but it is likewise degrading to the character of woman. Beaumont and Fletcher, who can follow Shakspere in his errors only, have presented a still worse, because more loathsome and contradictory, instance of the same kind in

[1] Read "he."

the "Night-Walker," in the marriage of Alathe to Algripe. Of the counterbalancing beauties of "Measure for Measure," I need say nothing; for I have already remarked that the play is Shakspere's throughout.

Act iii. sc. 1.

"'Ay, but to die, and go we know not where,' &c.

"This natural fear of Claudio, from the antipathy we have to death, seems very little varied from that infamous wish of Mæcenas, recorded in the 101st epistle of Seneca:

"'*Debilem facito manu,*
Debilem pede, coxa,' &c." Warburton's note.

I cannot but think this rather an heroic resolve, than an infamous wish. It appears to me to be the grandest symptom of an immortal spirit, when even that bedimmed and overwhelmed spirit recked not of its own immortality, still to seek to be,—to be a mind, a will.

As fame is to reputation, so heaven is to an estate, or immediate advantage. The difference is, that the self-love of the former cannot exist but by a complete suppression and habitual supplantation of immediate selfishness. In one point of view, the miser is more estimable than the spendthrift;—only that the miser's present feelings are as much of the present as the spendthrift's. But *cæteris paribus*, that is, upon the supposition that whatever is good or lovely in the one coexists equally in the other, then, doubtless, the master of the present is less a selfish being, an animal, than he who lives for the moment with no inheritance in the future. Whatever can degrade man, is supposed in the latter case, whatever can elevate him, in the former. And as to self;—strange and generous self! that can only be such a self by a complete divestment of all that men call self,—of all that can make it either practically to others, or consciously to the individual himself, different from the human race in its ideal. Such self is but a perpetual religion, an inalienable acknowledgment of

God, the sole basis and ground of being. In this sense, how can I love God, and not love myself, as far as it is of God?

Ib. sc. 2.

> "Pattern in himself to know,
> Grace to stand, and virtue go."

Worse metre, indeed, but better English would be,—

> "Grace to stand, virtue to go."

Cymbeline.

Act i. sc. 1.

> "You do not meet a man, but frowns: our bloods
> No more obey the heavens, than our courtiers'
> Still seem, as does the king's."

There can be little doubt of Mr. Tyrwhitt's emendations of "courtiers" and "king," as to the sense;—only it is not impossible that Shakspere's dramatic language may allow of the word, "brows" or "faces" being understood after the word "courtiers'," which might then remain in the genitive case plural. But the nominative plural makes excellent sense, and is sufficiently elegant, and sounds to my ear Shaksperian. What, however, is meant by "our bloods no more obey the heavens?"—Dr. Johnson's assertion that "bloods" signify "countenances," is, I think, mistaken both in the thought conveyed—(for it was never a popular belief that the stars governed men's countenances,) and in the usage, which requires an antithesis of the blood,—or the temperament of the four humours, choler, melancholy, phlegm, and the red globules, or the sanguine portion, which was supposed not to be in our own power, but, to be dependent on the influences of the heavenly bodies,—and the countenances which are in our

power really, though from flattery we bring them into a no less apparent dependence on the sovereign, than the former are in actual dependence on the constellations.

I have sometimes thought that the word "courtiers" was a misprint for "countenances," arising from an anticipation, by foreglance of the compositor's eye, of the word "courtier" a few lines below. The written *r* is easily and often confounded with the written *n*. The compositor read the first syllable *court*, and—his eye at the same time catching the word "courtier" lower down—he completed the word without reconsulting the copy. It is not unlikely that Shakspere intended first to express generally the same thought, which a little afterwards he repeats with a particular application to the persons meant;—a common usage of the pronominal "our," where the speaker does not really mean to include himself; and the word "you" is an additional confirmation of the "our" being used in this place, for men generally and indefinitely, just as "you do not meet," is the same as, "one does not meet."

Act i. sc. 2.[1] Imogen's speech:—

> "—My dearest husband,
> I something fear my father's wrath; but nothing
> (Always reserved my holy duty) what
> His rage can do on me."

Place the emphasis on "me;" for "rage" is a mere repetition of "wrath."

> "*Cym.* O disloyal thing,
> That should'st repair my youth, thou heapest
> A year's age on me."

How is it that the commentators take no notice of the un-Shaksperian defect in the metre of the second line, and

[1] So in 1st Fol. "Sc. 1" in Globe Ed.

what in Shakspere is the same, in the harmony with the sense and feeling? Some word or words must have slipped out after "youth,"—possibly "and see:"—

"That should'st repair my youth!—and see, thou heap'st," &c.

Ib. sc. 4.[1] Pisanio's speech:—

"—For so long
As he could make me with *this* eye or ear
Distinguish him from others," &c.

But "*this* eye," in spite of the supposition of its being used δειικτικως, is very awkward. I should think that either "or"—or "the" was Shakspere's word;—

"As he could make me or with eye or ear."

Ib. sc. 7.[2] Iachimo's speech:—

"Hath nature given them eyes
To see this vaulted arch, and the rich crop
Of sea and land, which can distinguish 'twixt
The fiery orbs above, and the twinn'd stones
Upon the number'd beach."

I would suggest "cope" for "crop." As to "twinn'd stones"—may it not be a bold *catachresis* for muscles, ockles, and other empty shells with hinges, which are truly twinned? I would take Dr. Farmer's "umber'd," which I had proposed before I ever heard of its having been already offered by him: but I do not adopt his interpretation of the word, which I think is not derived from *umbra*, a shade, but from *umber*, a dingy yellow-brown soil, which most commonly forms the mass of the sludge on the sea-shore, and on the banks of tide-rivers at low water. One other possible interpretation of this sentence has occurred to me, just barely worth mentioning;—that the "twinn'd stones" are the *augrim* stones upon the

[1] So in 1st Fol. "Sc. 3" in Globe Ed.
[2] So in 1st Fol. "Sc. 6" in Globe Ed.

number'd beech, that is, the astronomical tables of beech-wood.

Act v. sc. 5.

"*Sooth.* When as a lion's whelp," &c.

It is not easy to conjecture why Shakspere should have introduced this ludicrous scroll, which answers no one purpose, either propulsive, or explicatory, unless as a joke on etymology.

Titus Andronicus.

Act i. sc. 1. Theobald's note.

"I never heard it so much as intimated, that he (Shakspere) had turned his genius to stage-writing, before he associated with the players, and became one of their body."

That Shakspere never "turned his genius to stage-writing," as Theobald most *Theobaldice* phrases it, before he became an actor, is an assertion of about as much authority, as the precious story that he left Stratford for deer-stealing, and that he lived by holding gentlemen's horses at the doors of the theatre, and other trash of that arch-gossip, old Aubrey. The metre is an argument against Titus Andronicus being Shakspere's, worth a score such chronological surmises. Yet I incline to think that both in this play and in Jeronymo, Shakspere wrote some passages, and that they are the earliest of his compositions.

Act v. sc. 2.

I think it not improbable that the lines from—

"I am not mad; I know thee well enough;—

* * * * * * *

So thou destroy Rapine, and Murder there."

were written by Shakspere in his earliest period. But instead of the text—

"Revenge, *which makes the foul offender quake.*
Hor. Art thou Revenge? and art thou sent to me?"—

the words in italics ought to be omitted.

Troilus and Cressida.

Mr. Pope (after Dryden) informs us, that the story of Troilus and Cressida was originally the work of one Lollius, a Lombard: but Dryden goes yet further; he declares it to have been written in Latin verse, and that Chaucer translated it.—*Lollius was a historiographer of Urbino in Italy.* Note in Stockdale's edition, 1807.

"Lollius was a historiographer of Urbino in Italy." So affirms the notary, to whom the Sieur Stockdale committed the *disfacimento* of Ayscough's excellent edition of Shakspere. Pity that the researchful notary has not either told us in what century, and of what history, he was a writer, or been simply content to depose, that Lollius, if a writer of that name existed at all, was a somewhat somewhere. The notary speaks of the *Troy Boke* of Lydgate, printed in 1513. I have never seen it; but I deeply regret that Chalmers did not substitute the whole of Lydgate's works from the MSS. extant, for the almost worthless Gower.

The "Troilus and Cressida" of Shakspere can scarcely be classed with his dramas of Greek and Roman history: but it forms an intermediate link between the fictitious Greek and Roman histories, which we may call legendary dramas, and the proper ancient histories; that is, between the "Pericles" or "Titus Andronicus," and the "Coriolanus," or "Julius Cæsar." "Cymbeline" is a *congener* with "Pericles," and distinguished from "Lear" by not having any declared prominent object. But where shall we class the "Timon of Athens?" Perhaps immediately below

"Lear." It is a Lear of the satirical drama; a Lear of domestic or ordinary life;—a local eddy of passion on the high road of society, while all around is the week-day goings on of wind and weather; a Lear, therefore, without its soul-searching flashes, its ear-cleaving thunderclaps, its meteoric splendors,—without the contagion and the fearful sympathies of nature, the fates, the furies, the frenzied elements, dancing in and out, now breaking through, and scattering,—now hand in hand with,—the fierce or fantastic group of human passions, crimes, and anguishes, reeling on the unsteady ground, in a wild harmony to the shock and the swell of an earthquake. But my present subject was "Troilus and Cressida:" and I suppose that, scarcely knowing what to say of it, I by a cunning of instinct ran off to subjects on which I should find it difficult not to say too much, though certain after all that I should still leave the better part unsaid, and the gleaning for others richer than my own harvest.

Indeed, there is no one of Shakspere's plays harder t characterize. The name and the remembrances connecte with it, prepare us for the representation of attachment n less faithful than fervent on the side of the youth, and sudden and shameless inconstancy on the part of the lad And this is, indeed, as the gold thread on which the scen are strung, though often kept out of sight and out of min by gems of greater value than itself. But as Shakspere calls forth nothing from the mausoleum of history, or the catacombs of tradition, without giving, or eliciting, some permanent and general interest, and brings forward no subject which he does not moralize or intellectualize,—so here he has drawn in Cressida the portrait of a vehement passion, that, having its true origin and proper cause in warmth of temperament, fastens on, rather than fixes to, some one object by liking and temporary preference.

"There's language in her eye, her cheek, her lip,
Nay, her foot speaks; her wanton spirits look out
At every joint and motive of her body."[1]

This Shakspere has contrasted with the profound affection represented in Troilus, and alone worthy the name of love;—affection, passionate indeed,—swoln with the confluence of youthful instincts and youthful fancy, and growing in the radiance of hope newly risen, in short enlarged by the collective sympathies of nature;—but still having a depth of calmer element in a will stronger than desire, more entire than choice, and which gives permanence to its own act by converting it into faith and duty. Hence with excellent judgment, and with an excellence higher than mere judgment can give, at the close of the play, when Cressida has sunk into infamy below retrieval and beneath hope, the same will, which had been the substance and the basis of his love, while the restless pleasures and passionate longings, like sea-waves, had tossed but on its surface,—this same moral energy is represented as snatching him aloof from all neighbourhood with her dishonour, from all lingering fondness and languishing regrets, whilst it rushes with him into other and nobler duties, and deepens the channel, which his heroic brother's death had left empty for its collected flood. Yet another secondary and subordinate purpose Shakspere has inwoven with his delineation of these two characters,—that of opposing the inferior civilization, but purer morals, of the Trojans to

[1] "But who is this, what thing of sea or land?
Female of sex it seems,
That so bedeck'd, ornate, and gay,
Comes this way sailing
Like a stately ship
Of Tarsus, bound for the isles
Of Javan or Gadire
With all her bravery on . . .?"
Milton's *Sams. Agon.* l. 710-17.

the refinements, deep policy, but duplicity and sensual corruptions, of the Greeks.

To all this, however, so little comparative projection is given,—nay, the masterly group of Agamemnon, Nestor, and Ulysses, and, still more in advance, that of Achilles, Ajax, and Thersites, so manifestly occupy the foreground, that the subservience and vassalage of strength and animal courage to intellect and policy seems to be the lesson most often in our poet's view, and which he has taken little pains to connect with the former more interesting moral impersonated in the titular hero and heroine of the drama. But I am half inclined to believe, that Shakspere's main object, or shall I rather say, his ruling impulse, was to translate the poetic heroes of paganism into the not less rude, but more intellectually vigorous, and more *featurely*, warriors of Christian chivalry,—and to substantiate the distinct and graceful profiles or outlines of the Homeric epic into the flesh and blood of the romantic drama,—in short, to give a grand history-piece in the robust style of Albert Durer.

The character of Thersites, in particular, well deserves a more careful examination, as the Caliban of demagogic life:—the admirable portrait of intellectual power deserted by all grace, all moral principle, all not momentary impulse;—just wise enough to detect the weak head, and fool enough to provoke the armed fist of his betters;—one whom malcontent Achilles can inveigle from malcontent Ajax, under the one condition, that he shall be called on to do nothing but abuse and slander, and that he shall be allowed to abuse as much and as purulently as he likes, that is, as he can;—in short, a mule,—quarrelsome by the original discord of his nature,—a slave by tenure of his own baseness,—made to bray and be brayed at, to despise and be despicable. "Aye, Sir, but say what you will, he is a very clever fellow, though the best friends will fall

out. There was a time when Ajax thought he deserved to have a statue of gold erected to him, and handsome Achilles, at the head of the Myrmidons, gave no little credit to his *friend Thersites!*"

Act iv. sc. 5. Speech of Ulysses:—

"O, these encounterers, so glib of tongue,
That give *a coasting*[1] welcome ere it comes—"

Should it be "accosting?" "Accost her, knight, accost!" in the "Twelfth Night." Yet there sounds a something so Shaksperian in the phrase—"give a coasting welcome," ("coasting" being taken as the epithet and adjective of "welcome,") that had the following words been, "ere *they land*," instead of "ere it comes," I should have preferred the interpretation. The sense now is, "that give welcome to a salute ere it comes."

Coriolanus.

This play illustrates the wonderfully philosophic impartiality of Shakspere's politics. His own country's history furnished him with no matter, but what was too recent to be devoted to patriotism. Besides, he knew that the instruction of ancient history would seem more dispassionate. In "Coriolanus" and "Julius Cæsar," you see Shakspere's good-natured laugh at mobs. Compare this with Sir Thomas Brown's aristocracy of spirit.

Act i. sc. 1. Coriolanus' speech:—

"He that depends
Upon your favours, swims with fins of lead,
And hews down oaks with rushes. Hang ye! Trust ye?"

I suspect that Shakspere wrote it transposed;

"Trust ye? Hange ye?"

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[1] So, 1st Fol. "Accosting" is adopted in the Globe Ed.

Ib. sc. 10. Speech of Aufidius:—

"Mine emulation
Hath not that honor in't, it had; for where
I thought to crush him in an equal force,
True sword to sword; I'll potch at him some way,
Or wrath, or craft may get him.—
My valor[1] (poison'd
With only suffering stain by him) for him
Shall fly out of itself: not[1] sleep, nor sanctuary,
Being naked, sick, nor fane, nor capitol,
The prayers of priests, nor times of sacrifices,
Embankments[1] all of fury, shall lift up
Their rotten privilege and custom 'gainst
My hate to Marcius."

I have such deep faith in Shakspere's heart-lore, that I take for granted that this is in nature, and not as a mere anomaly; although I cannot in myself discover any germ of possible feeling, which could wax and unfold itself into such sentiment as this. However, I perceive that in this speech is meant to be contained a prevention of shock at the after-change in Aufidius' character.

Act ii. sc. 1. Speech of Menenius:—

"The most sovereign prescription in *Galen*," &c.

Was it without, or in contempt of, historical information that Shakspere made the contemporaries of Coriolanus quote Cato and Galen? I cannot decide to my own satisfaction.

Ib. sc. 3. Speech of Coriolanus:—

"Why in this wolvish gown[2] should I stand here—"

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[1] Read (1st Fol. and Globe Ed.)

"My valour's poison'd
With only suffering stain by him; for him."

Also "nor sleep," and "embarquement." "Embankment" is a plausible suggestion, but "embarquement" is correct. The sense of it is "embargoes, impediments."—Dyce's "Shak. Glossary."

[2] 1st Fol. 1623, "woolvish tongue;" 2nd Fol. 1632, "gown;" Globe Ed. "toge," which was Malone's suggestion.

That the gown of the candidate was of whitened wool, we know. Does "wolvish" or "woolvish" mean "made of wool?" If it means "wolfish," what is the sense?

Act iv. sc. 7. Speech of Aufidius:—

"All places yield to him ere he sits down," &c.

I have always thought this in itself so beautiful speech, the least explicable from the mood and full intention of the speaker, of any in the whole works of Shakspere. I cherish the hope that I am mistaken, and that, becoming wiser, I shall discover some profound excellence in that, in which I now appear to detect an imperfection.

Julius Cæsar.

Act i. sc. 1.

"*Mar.* What meanest *thou* by that? Mend me, thou saucy fellow!"

The speeches of Flavius and Marullus are in blank verse. Wherever regular metre can be rendered truly imitative of character, passion, or personal rank, Shakspere seldom, if ever, neglects it. Hence this line should be read:—

"What mean'st by that? mend me, thou saucy fellow!"

I say regular metre: for even the prose has in the highest and lowest dramatic personage, a Cobbler or a Hamlet, a rhythm so felicitous and so severally appropriate, as to be a virtual metre.

Ib. sc. 2.

"*Bru.* A soothsayer bids you beware the Ides of March."

If my ear does not deceive me, the metre of this line was meant to express that sort of mild philosophic contempt, characterizing Brutus even in his first casual speech. The line is a trimeter,—each *dipodia* containing two accented

and two unaccented syllables, but variously arranged, as thus;—

/ ∪ — — ∪ | — ∪ ∪ — | ∪ — ∪ /—

"A soothsayer | bids you beware | the Ides of March."

Ib. Speech of Brutus:

"Set honor in one eye, and death i' the other,
And I will look on *both* indifferently."

Warburton would read "death" for "both;" but I prefer the old text. There are here three things, the public good, the individual Brutus' honor, and his death. The latter two so balanced each other, that he could decide for the first by equipoise; nay—the thought growing—that honour had more weight than death. That Cassius understood it as Warburton, is the beauty of Cassius as contrasted with Brutus.

Ib. Cæsar's speech:—

"He loves no plays,
As thou dost, Antony; he hears no music," &c.

"This is not a trivial observation, nor does our poet mean barely by it that Cassius was not a merry, sprightly man; but that he had not due temperament of harmony in his disposition." Theobald's note.

O Theobald! what a commentator wast thou, when thou would'st affect to understand Shakspere, instead of contenting thyself with collating the text! The meaning here is too deep for a line ten-fold the length of thine to fathom.

Ib. sc. 3. Cæsar's[1] speech:—

"Be *factious* for redress of all these griefs;
And I will set this foot of mine as far,
As who goes farthest."

I understand it thus: "You have spoken as a conspirator; be so in *fact*, and I will join you. Act on your principles, and realize them in a fact."

[1] "Cæsar's" is a slip of the pen for "Casca's."

Act ii. sc. 1. Speech of Brutus:—

"It must be by his death; and, for my part,
I know no personal cause to spurn at him,
But for the general. He would be crown'd:—
How that might change his nature, there's the question.
——— And, to speak truth of Cæsar,
I have not known when his affections sway'd
More than his reason.
——— So Cæsar may;
Then, lest he may, prevent.

This speech is singular;—at least, I do not at present see into Shakspere's motive, his *rationale*, or in what point of view he meant Brutus' character to appear. For surely—(this I mean is what I say to myself, with my present *quantum* of insight, only modified by my experience in how many instances I have ripened into a perception of beauties, where I had before descried faults;) surely, nothing can seem more discordant with our historical preconceptions of Brutus, or more lowering to the intellect of the Stoico-Platonic tyrannicide, than the tenets here attributed to him—to him, the stern Roman republican; namely,—that he would have no objection to a king, or to Cæsar, a monarch in Rome, would Cæsar but be as good a monarch as he now seems disposed to be! How, too, could Brutus say that he found no personal cause—none in Cæsar's past conduct as a man? Had he not passed the Rubicon? Had he not entered Rome as a conqueror? Had he not placed his Gauls in the Senate?—Shakspere, it may be said, has not brought these things forward.—True;—and this is just the ground of my perplexity. What character did Shakspere mean his Brutus to be?

Ib. Speech of Brutus:—

"For if thou *path*, thy native semblance on—"

Surely, there need be no scruple in treating this "path" as a mere misprint or mis-script for "put." In what

place does Shakspere,—where does any other writer[1] of the same age—use "path" as a verb for "walk?"

Ib. sc. 2. Cæsar's speech:—

"She dreamt last[2] night, she saw my *statue*—"

No doubt, it should be *statua*, as in the same age, they more often pronounced "heroes" as a trisyllable than dissyllable. A modern tragic poet would have written,—

"Last night she dreamt, that she my statue saw—"

But Shakspere never avails himself of the supposed license of transposition, merely for the metre. There is always some logic either of thought or passion to justify it.

Act iii. sc. 1. Antony's speech:—

"Pardon me, Julius—here wast thou bay'd, brave hart;
Here didst thou fall, and here thy hunters stand
Sign'd in thy spoil, and crimson'd in thy death.[3]
O world! thou wast the forest to this hart,
And this, indeed, O world! the heart of thee."

I doubt the genuineness of the last two lines;—not because they are vile; but first, on account of the rhythm, which is not Shaksperian, but just the very tune of some old play, from which the actor might have interpolated them—and secondly, because they interrupt, not only the sense and connection, but likewise the flow both of the passion and (what is with me still more decisive) of the Shaksperian link of association. As with many another parenthesis or gloss slipt into the text, we have only to read the passage without it, to see that it never was in it. I venture to say there is no instance in Shakspere fairly like this. Conceits he has; but they not only rise out of some word

[1] Consult Nares' Glossary for other instances.

[2] Read "to-night."

[3] Read "lethe." Other authors use the word in the sense of "death." Nares thinks it was pronounced as a monosyllable, when so used, and derived rather from *lethum* than *lethe*.

in the lines before, but also lead to the thought in the lines following. Here the conceit is a mere alien: Antony forgets an image, when he is even touching it, and then recollects it, when the thought last in his mind must have led him away from it.

Act iv. sc. 3. Speech of Brutus:—

> "—— What, shall one of us,
> That struck the foremost man of all this world,
> But for *supporting robbers*."

This seemingly strange assertion of Brutus is unhappily verified in the present day. What is an immense army, in which the lust of plunder has quenched all the duties of the citizen, other than a horde of robbers, or differenced only as fiends are from ordinarily reprobate men? Cæsar supported, and was supported by, such as these;—and even so Buonaparte in our days.[1]

I know no part of Shakspere that more impresses on me the belief of his genius being superhuman, than this scene between Brutus and Cassius. In the Gnostic heresy, it might have been credited with less absurdity than most of their dogmas, that the Supreme had employed him to create, previously to his function of representing, characters.

Antony and Cleopatra.

Shakspere can be complimented only by comparison with himself: all other eulogies are either heterogeneous, as when they are in reference to Spenser or Milton; or they are flat truisms, as when he is gravely preferred to Corneille, Racine, or even his own immediate successors, Beaumont and Fletcher, Massinger and the rest. The

[1] Marcus Aurelius Antoninus (x. 10, Long's Translation) sets himself down as a robber, because he warred against the Sarmatians.

highest praise, or rather form of praise, of this play, which I can offer in my own mind, is the doubt which the perusal always occasions in me, whether the "Antony and Cleopatra" is not, in all exhibitions of a giant power in its strength and vigour of maturity, a formidable rival of "Macbeth," "Lear," "Hamlet," and "Othello." *Feliciter audax* is the motto for its style comparatively with that of Shakspere's other works, even as it is the general motto of all his works compared with those of other poets. Be it remembered, too, that this happy valiancy of style is but the representative and result of all the material excellencies so expressed.

This play should be perused in mental contrast with "Romeo and Juliet;"—as the love of passion and appetite opposed to the love of affection and instinct. But the art displayed in the character of Cleopatra is profound; it this, especially, that the sense of criminality in her passio is lessened by our insight into its depth and energy, at th very moment that we cannot but perceive that the passi itself springs out of the habitual craving of a licentio nature, and that it is supported and reinforced by volunta stimulus and sought-for associations, instead of blossomi out of spontaneous emotion.

Of all Shakspere's historical plays, "Antony and Cle patra" is by far the most wonderful. There is not one i which he has followed history so minutely, and yet ther are few in which he impresses the notion of angeli strength so much;—perhaps none in which he impresses it more strongly. This is greatly owing to the manner in which the fiery force is sustained throughout, and to the numerous momentary flashes of nature counteracting the historic abstraction. As a wonderful specimen of the way in which Shakspere lives up to the very end of this play, read the last part of the concluding scene. And if you would feel the judgment as well as the genius of Shak-

spere in your hearts' core, compare this astonishing drama with Dryden's "All For Love."

Act. i. sc. 1. Philo's speech:—

> "His captain's heart,
> Which in the scuffles of great fights hath burst
> The buckles on his breast, *reneges* all temper—"

It should be "reneagues," or "reniegues," as "fatigues," &c.

Ib.

> "Take but good note, and you shall see in him
> The triple pillar of the world transformed
> Into a strumpet's *fool*."

Warburton's conjecture of "stool" is ingenious, and would be a probable reading, if the scene opening had discovered Antony with Cleopatra on his lap. But, represented as he is walking and jesting with her, "fool" must be the word. Warburton's objection is shallow, and implies that he confounded the dramatic with the epic style. The "pillar" of a state is so common a metaphor as to have lost the image in the thing meant to be imaged.

Ib. sc. 2.

> "Much is breeding;
> Which, like the courser's hair, hath yet but life,
> And not a serpent's poison."

This is so far true to appearance, that a horse-hair, "laid," as Hollinshed says, "in a pail of water," will become the supporter of seemingly one worm, though probably of an immense number of small slimy water-lives. The hair will twirl round a finger, and sensibly compress it. It is a common experiment with school boys in Cumberland and Westmorland.

Act ii. sc. 2. Speech of Enobarbus:—

> "Her gentlewomen, like the Nereids,
> So many *mermaids*, tended her i' th' eyes,
> And made their bends adornings. At the helm
> A seeming mermaid steers."

I have the greatest difficulty in believing that Shakspere wrote the first "mermaids." He never, I think, would have so weakened by useless anticipation the fine image immediately following. The epithet "seeming" becomes so extremely improper after the whole number had been positively called "so many mermaids."

Timon of Athens.[1]

Act i. sc. 1.

> "*Tim.* The man is honest.
> *Old Ath.* *Therefore he will be,* Timon.
> His honesty rewards him in itself."—

Warburton's comment—"If the man be honest, for that reason he will be so in this, and not endeavour at the injustice of gaining my daughter without my consent"—is, like almost all his comments, ingenious in blunder: he can never see any other writer's thoughts for the misworking swarm of his own. The meaning of the first line the poet himself explains, or rather unfolds, in the second "The man is honest!"—"True;—and for that very cause and with no additional or extrinsic motive, he will be so. No man can be justly called honest, who is not so for honesty's sake, itself including its own reward." Note that "honesty" in Shakspere's age retained much of its old dignity, and that contradistinction of the *honestum* from the *utile*, in which its very essence and definition consist. If it be *honestum*, it cannot depend on the *utile*.

Ib. Speech of Apemantus, printed as prose in Theobald's edition:—

> "So, so! aches contract, and starve your supple joints!"

I may remark here the fineness of Shakspere's sense of musical period, which would almost by itself have suggested

[1] See notes on "Troilus and Cressida."

(if the hundred positive proofs had not been extant), that the word "aches" was then *ad libitum*, a disyllable—*aitches*. For read it, "aches," in this sentence, and I would challenge you to find any period in Shakspere's writings with the same musical, or, rather dissonant, intonation. Try the one, and then the other, by your ear, reading the sentence aloud, first with the word as a disyllable, and then as a monosyllable, and you will feel what I mean.[1]

Ib. sc. 2. Cupid's speech: Warburton's correction of—

"There taste, touch, all pleas'd from thy table rise—"

into

"Th' ear, taste, touch, smell," &c.

This is indeed an excellent emendation.

Act ii. sc. 1. Senator's speech:—

"—nor then silenc'd with[2]
'Commend me to your master'—*and the cap*
Plays in the right hand, thus:—"

Either, methinks, "plays" should be "play'd," or "and" should be changed to "while." I can certainly understand it as a parenthesis, an interadditive of scorn; but it does not sound to my ear as in Shakspere's manner.

Ib. sc. 2. Timon's speech: (Theobald.)

"And that unaptness made *you*[3] minister,
Thus to excuse yourself."

---

[1] It is, of course, a verse,—

"Aches contract, and starve your supple joints!"

and is so printed in all later editions. But Mr. C. was reading it in prose in Theobald; and it is curious to see how his ear detected the rhythmical necessity for pronouncing "aches" as a disyllable, although the metrical necessity seems for the moment to have escaped him. —H. N. C.

[2] Read "when" for "with."

[3] "Your" in 1st Fol. and Globe Ed.

Read *your*—at least I cannot otherwise understand the line. Yo[u] made my chance indisposition and occasional unaptn[ess] your minister—that is, the ground on which [you] excuse yourself. Or, perhaps, no correction is [nec]essary, if we construe "made you" as "did you make;" "and that unaptness did you make help you thus to excuse yourself." But the former seems more in Shakspere's manner, and is less liable to be misunderstood.[1]

Act iii. sc. 3. Servant's speech:—

"How fairly this lord strives to appear foul!—takes virtuous copies to be wicked; *like those that under hot, ardent, zeal would set whole realms on fire. Of such a nature is his politic love.*"

This latter clause I grievously suspect to have been an addition of the players, which had hit, and, being constantly applauded, procured a settled occupancy in the prompter's copy. Not that Shakspere does not elsewhere sneer at the Puritans; but here it is introduced so *nolens volens* (excuse the phrase) by the head and shoulders!—and is besides so much more likely to have been conceived in the age of Charles I.

Act iv. sc. 3. Timon's speech:—

"Raise me this beggar, and *deny't* that lord.—"

Warburton reads "denude."

I cannot see the necessity of this alteration. The editors and commentators are, all of them, ready enough to cry out against Shakspere's laxities and licenses of style, forgetting that he is not merely a poet, but a dramatic poet; that, when the head and the heart are swelling with fulness, a man does not ask himself whether he has grammatically arranged, but only whether (the context taken in) he has conveyed, his meaning. "Deny" is here clearly equal to "withhold;" and the "it," quite in the genius of

[1] "Your" is the received reading now.—H. N. C.

vehement conversation, which a syntaxist explains by ellipses and *subauditurs* in a Greek or Latin classic, yet triumphs over as ignorances in a contemporary, refers to accidental and artificial rank or elevation, implied in the verb "raise." Besides, does the word "denude" occur in any writer before, or of, Shakspere's age?

Romeo and Juliet.

I have previously had occasion to speak at large on the subject of the three unities of time, place, and action, as applied to the drama in the abstract, and to the particular stage for which Shakspere wrote, as far as he can be said to have written for any stage but that of the universal mind. I hope I have in some measure succeeded in demonstrating that the former two, instead of being rules, were mere inconveniences attached to the local peculiarities of the Athenian drama; that the last alone deserved the name of a principle, and that in the preservation of this unity Shakspere stood pre-eminent. Yet, instead of unity of action, I should greatly prefer the more appropriate, though scholastic and uncouth, words homogeneity, proportionateness, and totality of interest,—expressions, which involve the distinction, or rather the essential difference, betwixt the shaping skill of mechanical talent, and the creative, productive, life-power of inspired genius. In the former each part is separately conceived, and then by a succeeding act put together;—not as watches are made for whole-sale,—(for there each part supposes a pre-conception of the whole in some mind)—but more like pictures on a motley screen. Whence arises the harmony that strikes us in the wildest natural landscapes,—in the relative shapes of rocks, the harmony of colours in the heaths, ferns, and lichens, the leaves of the beech and the oak, the stems and

rich brown branches of the birch and other mountain trees, varying from verging autumn to returning spring,—compared with the visual effect from the greater number of artificial plantations?—From this, that the natural landscape is effected, as it were, by a single energy modified *ab intra* in each component part. And as this is the particular excellence of the Shaksperian drama generally, so is it especially characteristic of the "Romeo and Juliet."

The groundwork of the tale is altogether in family life, and the events of the play have their first origin in family feuds. Filmy as are the eyes of party-spirit, at once dim and truculent, still there is commonly some real or supposed object in view, or principle to be maintained; and though but the twisted wires on the plate of rosin in the preparation for electrical pictures, it is still a guide in some degree, an assimilation to an outline. But in family quarrels, which have proved scarcely less injurious to states, wilfulness, and precipitancy, and passion from mere habit and custom, can alone be expected. With his accustomed judgment, Shakspere has begun by placing before us a lively picture of all the impulses of the play; and, as nature ever presents two sides, one for Heraclitus, and one for Democritus, he has, by way of prelude, shown the laughable absurdity of the evil by the contagion of it reaching the servants, who have so little to do with it, but who are under the necessity of letting the superfluity of sensorial power fly off through the escape-valve of wit-combats, and of quarrelling with weapons of sharper edge, all in humble imitation of their masters. Yet there is a sort of unhired fidelity, an *ourishness* about all this that makes it rest pleasant on one's feelings. All the first scene, down to the conclusion of the Prince's speech, is a motley dance of all ranks and ages to one tune, as if the horn of Huon had been playing behind the scenes.

Benvolio's speech—

"Madam, an hour before the worshipp'd sun
Peer'd forth the golden window of the east"—

and, far more strikingly, the following speech of old Montague—

"Many a morning hath he there been seen
With tears augmenting the fresh morning[1] dew"—

prove that Shakspere meant the Romeo and Juliet to approach to a poem, which, and indeed its early date, may be also inferred from the multitude of rhyming couplets throughout. And if we are right, from the internal evidence, in pronouncing this one of Shakspere's early dramas, it affords a strong instance of the fineness of his insight into the nature of the passions, that Romeo is introduced already love-bewildered. The necessity of loving creates an object for itself in man and woman; and yet there is a difference in this respect between the sexes, though only to be known by a perception of it. It would have displeased us if Juliet had been represented as already in love, or as fancying herself so;—but no one, I believe, ever experiences any shock at Romeo's forgetting his Rosaline, who had been a mere name for the yearning of his youthful imagination, and rushing into his passion for Juliet. Rosaline was a mere creation of his fancy; and we should remark the boastful positiveness of Romeo in a love of his own making, which is never shown where love is really near the heart.

"When the devout religion of mine eye
Maintains such falsehood, then turn tears to fires!
* * * * *
One fairer than my love! the all-seeing sun
Ne'er saw her match, since first the world begun."[2]

The character of the Nurse is the nearest of anything in Shakspere to a direct borrowing from mere observation;

[1] Read "morning's." [2] Act i. sc. 2.

and the reason is, that as in infancy and childhood the individual in nature is a representative of a class,—just as in describing one larch tree, you generalize a grove of them,—so it is nearly as much so in old age. The generalization is done to the poet's hand. Here you have the garrulity of age strengthened by the feelings of a long-trusted servant, whose sympathy with the mother's affections gives her privileges and rank in the household; and observe the mode of connection by accidents of time and place, and the childlike fondness of repetition in a second childhood, and also that happy, humble, ducking under, yet constant resurgence against, the check of her superiors!—

"Yes, madam!—Yet I cannot choose but laugh," &c.

In the fourth scene we have Mercutio introduced to us. O! how shall I describe that exquisite ebullience and overflow of youthful life, wafted on over the laughing waves of pleasure and prosperity, as a wanton beauty that distorts the face on which she knows her lover is gazing enraptured and wrinkles her forehead in the triumph of its smoothness! Wit ever wakeful, fancy busy and procreative as a bee, courage, an easy mind that, without cares of its own, is at once disposed to laugh away those of others, and yet to be interested in them,—these and all congenial qualities, melting into the common *copula* of them all, the man of rank and the gentleman, with all its excellencies and all its weaknesses, constitute the character of Mercutio.

Act i. sc. 5.

"*Tyb.* It fits when such a villain is a guest;
I'll not endure him.
Cap. He shall be endur'd.
What, goodman boy!—I say, he shall:—Go to;—
Am I the master here, or you?—Go to.
You'll not endure him!—God shall mend my soul—
You'll make a mutiny among my guests!

You will set cock-a-hoop! you'll be the man!
Tyb. Why, uncle, 'tis a shame.
Cap. Go to, go to,
You are a saucy boy!" &c.—

How admirable is the old man's impetuosity at once contrasting, yet harmonized, with young Tybalt's quarrelsome violence! But it would be endless to repeat observations of this sort. Every leaf is different on an oak tree; but still we can only say—our tongues defrauding our eyes—"This is another oak-leaf!"

Act ii. sc. 2. The garden scene:

Take notice in this enchanting scene of the contrast of Romeo's love with his former fancy; and weigh the skill shown in justifying him from his inconstancy by making us feel the difference of his passion. Yet this, too, is a love in, although not merely of, the imagination.

Ib.

"*Jul.* Well, do not swear; although I joy in thee,
I have no joy in[1] this contract to-night:
It is too rash, too unadvised, too sudden," &c.

With love, pure love, there is always an anxiety for the safety of the object, a disinterestedness, by which it is distinguished from the counterfeits of its name. Compare this scene with Act iii. sc. 1 of the "Tempest." I do not know a more wonderful instance of Shakspere's mastery in playing a distinctly rememberable variety on the same remembered air, than in the transporting love-confessions of Romeo and Juliet and Ferdinand and Miranda. There seems more passion in the one, and more dignity in the other; yet you feel that the sweet girlish lingering and busy movement of Juliet, and the calmer and more maidenly fondness of Miranda, might easily pass into each other.

[1] Read "of."

Ib. sc. 3. The Friar's speech:—

The reverend character of the Friar, like all Shakspere's representations of the great professions, is very delightful and tranquillizing, yet it is no digression, but immediately necessary to the carrying on of the plot.

Ib. sc. 4.

"*Rom.* Good morrow to you both. What counterfeit did I give you?" &c.

Compare again, Romeo's half-exerted, and half real, ease of mind with his first manner when in love with Rosaline! His will had come to the clenching point.

Ib. sc. 6.

"*Rom.* Do thou but close our hands with holy words,
Then love-devouring death do what he dare,
It is enough I may but call her mine."

The precipitancy, which is the character of the play, is well marked in this short scene of waiting for Juliet's arrival.

Act iii. sc. 1.

"*Mer.* No, 'tis not so deep as a well, nor so wide as a church door; but 'tis enough: 'twill serve: ask for me to-morrow, and you shall find me a grave man," &c.

How fine an effect the wit and raillery habitual to Mercutio, even struggling with his pain, give to Romeo's following speech, and at the same time so completely justifying his passionate revenge on Tybalt!

Ib. Benvolio's speech:

"But that he tilts
With piercing steel at bold Mercutio's breast."—

This small portion of untruth in Benvolio's narrative is finely conceived.

Ib. sc. 2. Juliet's speech:

"For thou wilt lie upon the wings of night
Whiter than new snow on a raven's back."—

Indeed the whole of this speech is imagination strained to the highest; and observe the blessed effect on the purity of the mind. What would Dryden have made of it?—

Ib.

"*Nurse.* Shame come to Romeo.
Jul. Blister'd be thy tongue
For such a wish!"

Note the Nurse's mistake of the mind's audible struggles with itself for its decision *in toto*.

Ib. sc. 3. Romeo's speech:—

"'Tis torture, and not mercy: heaven's[1] here,
Where Juliet lives," &c.

All deep passions are a sort of atheists, that believe no future.

Ib. sc. 5.

"*Cap.* Soft, take me with you, take me with you, wife—How! will she none?" &c.

A noble scene! Don't I see it with my own eyes?—Yes! but not with Juliet's. And observe in Capulet's last speech in this scene his mistake, as if love's causes were capable of being generalized.

Act iv. sc. 3. Juliet's speech:—

"O, look! methinks I see my cousin's ghost
Seeking out Romeo, that did spit his body
Upon a rapier's point:—Stay, Tybalt, stay!—
Romeo, I come! this do I drink to thee."

Shakspere provides for the finest decencies. It would have been too bold a thing for a girl of fifteen;—but she swallows the draught in a fit of fright.

[1] Read "heaven is."

Ib. sc. 5.

As the audience know that Juliet is not dead, this scene is, perhaps, excusable. But it is a strong warning to minor dramatists not to introduce at one time many separate characters agitated by one and the same circumstance. It is difficult to understand what effect, whether that of pity or of laughter, Shakspere meant to produce;—the occasion and the characteristic speeches are so little in harmony! For example, what the Nurse says is excellently suited to the Nurse's character, but grotesquely unsuited to the occasion.

Act v. sc. 1. Romeo's speech:—

> "O mischief! thou are swift
> To enter in the thoughts of desperate men!
> I do remember an apothecary," &c.

This famous passage is so beautiful as to be self-justified; yet, in addition, what a fine preparation it is for the tomb scene!

Ib. sc. 3. Romeo's speech:—

> "Good gentle youth, tempt not a desperate man,
> Fly hence and leave me."

The gentleness of Romeo was shown before, as softened by love; and now it is doubled by love and sorrow and awe of the place where he is.

Ib. Romeo's speech:—

> "How oft when men are at the point of death
> Have they been merry! which their keepers call
> A lightning before death. O, how may I
> Call this a lightning?—O, my love, my wife!" &c.

Here, here, is the master example how beauty can at once increase and modify passion!

Ib. Last scene.

How beautiful is the close! The spring and the winter meet;—winter assumes the character of spring, and spring the sadness of winter.

Lear.

Of all Shakspere's plays "Macbeth" is the most rapid, "Hamlet" the slowest, in movement. "Lear" combines length with rapidity,—like the hurricane and the whirlpool, *absorbing* while it advances. It begins as a stormy day in summer, with brightness; but that brightness is *lurid*, and anticipates the tempest.

It was not without forethought, nor is it without its due significance, that the division of Lear's kingdom is in the first six lines of the play stated as a thing already determined in all its particulars, previously to the trial of professions, as the relative rewards of which the daughters were to be made to consider their several portions. The strange, yet by no means unnatural, mixture of selfishness, sensibility, and habit of feeling derived from, and fostered by, the particular rank and usages of the individual;—the intense desire of being intensely beloved,—selfish, and yet characteristic of the selfishness of a loving and kindly nature alone;—the self-supportless leaning for all pleasure on another's breast;—the cravings after sympathy with a prodigal disinterestedness, frustrated by its own ostentation, and by the mode and nature of its claims;—the anxiety, the distrust, the jealousy, which more or less accompany all selfish affections, and are amongst the surest contradistinctions of mere fondness from true love, and which originate Lear's eager wish to enjoy his daughter's violent professions, whilst the inveterate habits of sovereignty convert the wish into claim and positive right, and an impliance with it into crime and treason;—these facts,

these passions, these moral verities, on which the whole tragedy is founded, are all prepared for, and will to the retrospect be found implied, in these first four or five lines of the play. They let us know that the trial is but a trick; and that the grossness of the old king's rage is in part the natural result of a silly trick suddenly and most unexpectedly baffled and disappointed.

It may here be worthy of notice, that "Lear" is the only serious performance of Shakspere, the interest and situations of which are derived from the assumption of a gross improbability; whereas Beaumont and Fletcher's tragedies are, almost all of them, founded on some out of the way accident or exception to the general experience of mankind. But observe the matchless judgment of our Shakspere. First, improbable as the conduct of Lear is in the first scene, yet it was an old story rooted in the popular faith,—a thing taken for granted already, and consequently without any of the effects of improbability. Secondly, it is merely the canvas for the characters and passions,—a mere occasion for,—and not, in the manner of Beaumont and Fletcher, perpetually recurring as the cause, and *sine qua non* of,—the incidents and emotions. Let the first scene of this play have been lost, and let it only be understood that a fond father had been duped by hypocritical professions of love and duty on the part of two daughters to disinherit the third, previously, and deservedly, more dear to him;—and all the rest of the tragedy would retain its interest undiminished, and be perfectly intelligible. The accidental is nowhere the groundwork of the passions, but that which is catholic, which in all ages has been and ever will be, close and native to the heart of man. Parental anguish from filial ingratitude, the genuineness of worth though coffined in bluntness, and the execrable vileness of a smooth iniquity. Perhaps I ought to have added the "Merchant of Venice;" but here too the same remar

apply. It was an old tale; and substitute any other danger than that of the pound of flesh (the circumstance in which the improbability lies), yet all the situations and the emotions appertaining to them remain equally excellent and appropriate. Whereas take away from the "Mad Lover" of Beaumont and Fletcher the fantastic hypothesis of his engagement to cut out his own heart, and have it presented to his mistress, and all the main scenes must go with it.

Kotzebue is the German Beaumont and Fletcher, without their poetic powers, and without their *vis comica*.[1] But, like them, he always deduces his situations and passions from marvellous accidents, and the trick of bringing one part of our moral nature to counteract another; as our pity for misfortune and admiration of generosity and courage to combat our condemnation of guilt, as in adultery, robbery, and other heinous crimes;—and, like them too, he excels in his mode of telling a story clearly and interestingly, in a series of dramatic dialogues. Only the trick of making tragedy-heroes and heroines out of shopkeepers and barmaids was too low for the age, and too unpoetic for the genius, of Beaumont and Fletcher, inferior in every respect as they are to their great predecessor and contemporary. How inferior would they have appeared, had not Shakspere existed for them to imitate;—which in every play, more or less, they do, and in their tragedies most glaringly:—and yet—(O shame! shame!)—they miss no opportunity of sneering at the divine man, and sub-detracting from his merits!

To return to Lear. Having thus in the fewest words, and in a natural reply to as natural a question,—which

[1] "If we would charitably consent to forget the comic humour, the wit, the felicities of style, in other words, *all* the poetry, and nine-tenths of all the genius of Beaumont and Fletcher, that which would remain becomes a Kotzebue."—*Biographia Literaria*, chap. xxiii.

yet answers the secondary purpose of attracting our attention to the difference or diversity between the characters of Cornwall and Albany,—provided the premisses and *data*, as it were, for our after insight into the mind and mood of the person, whose character, passions, and sufferings are the main subject-matter of the play;—from Lear, the *persona patiens* of his drama, Shakspere passes without delay to the second in importance, the chief agent and prime mover, and introduces Edmund to our acquaintance, preparing us with the same felicity of judgment, and in the same easy and natural way, for his character in the seemingly casual communication of its origin and occasion. From the first drawing up of the curtain Edmund has stood before us in the united strength and beauty of earliest manhood. Our eyes have been questioning him. Gifted as he is with high advantages of person, and further endowed by nature with a powerful intellect and a strong energetic will, even without any concurrence of circumstances and accident, pride will necessarily be the sin that most easily besets him. But Edmund is also the known and acknowledged son of the princely Gloster: he, therefore, has both the germ of pride, and the conditions best fitted to evolve and ripen it into a predominant feeling. Yet hitherto no reason appears why it should be other than the not unusual pride of person, talent, and birth,—a pride auxiliary, if not akin, to many virtues, and the natural ally of honourable impulses. But alas! in his own presence his own father takes shame to himself for the frank avowal that he is his father,—he has "blushed so often to acknowledge him that he is now brazed to it!" Edmund hears the circumstances of his birth spoken of with a most degrading and licentious levity,—his mother described as a wanton by her own paramour, and the remembrance of the animal sting, the low criminal gratifications connected with her wantonness and prostituted

beauty, assigned as the reason, why "the whoreson must be acknowledged!" This, and the consciousness of its notoriety; the gnawing conviction that every show of respect is an effort of courtesy, which recalls, while it represses, a contrary feeling;—this is the ever trickling flow of wormwood and gall into the wounds of pride,—the corrosive *virus* which inoculates pride with a venom not its own, with envy, hatred, and a lust for that power which in its blaze of radiance would hide the dark spots on his disc,—with pangs of shame personally undeserved and therefore felt as wrongs, and with a blind ferment of vindictive working towards the occasions and causes, especially towards a brother, whose stainless birth and lawful honours were the constant remembrancers of his own debasement, and were ever in the way to prevent all chance of its being unknown, or overlooked and forgotten. Add to this, that with excellent judgment, and provident for the claims of the moral sense,—for that which, relatively to the drama, is called poetic justice, and as the fittest means for reconciling the feelings of the spectators to the horrors of Gloster's after sufferings,—at least, of rendering them somewhat less unendurable;—(for I will not disguise my conviction, that in this one point the tragic in this play has been urged beyond the outermost mark and *ne plus ultra* of the dramatic)—Shakspere has precluded all excuse and palliation of the guilt incurred by both the parents of the base-born Edmund, by Gloster's confession that he was at the time a married man, and already blest with a lawful heir of his fortunes. The mournful alienation of brotherly love, occasioned by the law of primogeniture in noble families, or rather by the unnecessary distinctions engrafted thereon, and this in children of the same stock, is still almost proverbial on the continent,—especially, as I know from my own observation, in the south of Europe, —and appears to have been scarcely less common in our

own island before the Revolution of 1688, if we may judge from the characters and sentiments so frequent in our elder comedies. There is the younger brother, for instance, in Beaumont and Fletcher's play of the "Scornful Lady," on the one side, and Oliver in Shakspere's "As You Like It," on the other. Need it be said how heavy an aggravation, in such a case, the stain of bastardy must have been, were it only that the younger brother was liable to hear his own dishonour and his mother's infamy related by his father with an excusing shrug of the shoulders, and in a tone betwixt waggery and shame!

By the circumstances here enumerated as so many predisposing causes, Edmund's character might well be deemed already sufficiently explained; and our minds prepared for it. But in this tragedy the story or fable constrained Shakspere to introduce wickedness in an outrageous form in the persons of Regan and Goneril. He had read nature too heedfully not to know, that courage, intellect, and strength of character, are the most impressive forms of power, and that to power in itself, without reference to any moral end, an inevitable admiration and complacency appertains, whether it be displayed in the conquests of a Buonaparte or Tamerlane, or in the foam and the thunder of a cataract. But in the exhibition of such a character it was of the highest importance to prevent the guilt from passing into utter monstrosity,—which again depends on the presence or absence of causes and temptations sufficient to account for the wickedness, without the necessity of recurring to a thorough fiendishness of nature for its origination. For such are the appointed relations of intellectual power to truth, and of truth to goodness, that it becomes both morally and poetically unsafe to present what is admirable,—what our nature compels us to admire—in the mind, and what is most detestable in the heart, as coexisting in the same individual without any apparent con-

nection, or any modification of the one by the other. That Shakspere has in one instance, that of Iago, approached to this, and that he has done it successfully, is, perhaps, the most astonishing proof of his genius, and the opulence of its resources. But in the present tragedy, in which he was compelled to present a Goneril and a Regan, it was most carefully to be avoided;—and therefore the only one conceivable addition to the inauspicious influences on the preformation of Edmund's character is given, in the information that all the kindly counteractions to the mischievous feelings of shame, which might have been derived from co-*domestication with* Edgar and their common father, had been cut off by his absence from home, and foreign education from boyhood to the present time, and a prospect of its continuance, as if to preclude all risk of his interference with the father's views for the elder and legitimate son:—

"He hath been out nine years, and away he shall again."

Act i. sc. 1.

"*Cor.* Nothing, my lord.
Lear. Nothing?
Cor. Nothing.
Lear. Nothing can come of nothing: speak again.
Cor. Unhappy that I am, I cannot heave
My heart into my mouth: I love your majesty
According to my bond; nor more, nor less."

There is something of disgust at the ruthless hypocrisy of her sisters, and some little faulty admixture of pride and sullenness in Cordelia's "Nothing;" and her tone is well contrived, indeed, to lessen the glaring absurdity of Lear's conduct, but answers the yet more important purpose of forcing away the attention from the nursery-tale, the moment it has served its end, that of supplying the canvas for the picture. This is also materially furthered by Kent's opposition, which displays Lear's moral incapa-

bility of resigning the sovereign power in the very act of disposing of it. Kent is, perhaps, the nearest to perfect goodness in all Shakspere's characters, and yet the most individualized.[1] There is an extraordinary charm in his bluntness, which is that only of a nobleman arising from a contempt of overstrained courtesy; and combined with easy placability where goodness of heart is apparent. His passionate affection for, and fidelity to, Lear act on our feelings in Lear's own favour: virtue itself seems to be in company with him.

Ib. sc. 2. Edmund's speech:—

> "Who, in the lusty stealth of nature, take
> More composition and fierce quality
> Than doth," &c.

Warburton's note upon a quotation from Vanini.

Poor Vanini!—Any one but Warburton would have thought this precious passage more characteristic of Mr Shandy than of atheism. If the fact really were so (which it is not, but almost the contrary), I do not see why the most confirmed theist might not very naturally utter the same wish. But it is proverbial that the youngest son in a large family is commonly the man of the greatest talent in it; and as good an authority as Vanini has said—*incalescere in venerem ardentius, spei sobolis injuriosum esse.*

In this speech of Edmund you see, as soon as a man cannot reconcile himself to reason, how his conscience flies off by way of appeal to nature, who is sure upon such occasions never to find fault, and also how shame sharpens a predisposition in the heart to evil. For it is a profound moral, that shame will naturally generate guilt; the oppressed will be vindictive, like Shylock, and in the anguish of undeserved ignominy the delusion secretly springs up,

[1] Compare note on Mr. Collier's Sixth Lecture, from *The Friend*

of getting over the moral quality of an action by fixing the mind on the mere physical act alone.

Ib. Edmund's speech:—

"This is the excellent foppery of the world! that, when we are sick in fortune (often the surfeit of our own behaviour), we make guilty of our disasters, the sun, the moon, and the stars," &c.

Thus scorn and misanthropy are often the anticipations and mouth-pieces of wisdom in the detection of superstitions. Both individuals and nations may be free from such prejudices by being below them, as well as by rising above them.

Ib. sc. 3. The Steward should be placed in exact antithesis to Kent, as the only character of utter irredeemable baseness in Shakspere. Even in this the judgment and invention of the poet are very observable:—for what else could the willing tool of a Goneril be? Not a vice but this of baseness was left open to him.

Ib. sc. 4. In Lear old age is itself a character,—its natural imperfections being increased by life-long habits of receiving a prompt obedience. Any addition of individuality would have been unnecessary and painful; for the relations of others to him, of wondrous fidelity and of frightful ingratitude, alone sufficiently distinguish him. Thus Lear becomes the open and ample play-room of nature's passions.

"*Knight.* Since my young lady's going into France, Sir; the fool hath much pin'd away."

The Fool is no comic buffoon to make the groundlings laugh,—no forced condescension of Shakspere's genius to the taste of his audience. Accordingly the poet prepares for his introduction, which he never does with any of his common clowns and fools, by bringing him into living connection with the pathos of the play. He is as wonderful

a creation as Caliban; his wild babblings, and inspired idiocy, articulate and gauge the horrors of the scene.

The monster Goneril prepares what is necessary, while the character of Albany renders a still more maddening grievance possible, namely, Regan and Cornwall in perfect sympathy of monstrosity. Not a sentiment, not an image, which can give pleasure on its own account, is admitted; whenever these creatures are introduced, and they are brought forward as little as possible, pure horror reigns throughout. In this scene and in all the early speeches of Lear, the one general sentiment of filial ingratitude prevails as the main spring of the feelings;—in this early stage the outward object causing the pressure on the mind, which is not yet sufficiently familiarized with the anguish for the imagination to work upon it.

Ib.

"*Gon.* Do you mark that, my lord?
Alb. I cannot be so partial, Goneril,
To the great love I bear you.
Gon. Pray you, content," &c.

Observe the baffled endeavour of Goneril to act on the fears of Albany, and yet his passiveness, his *inertia;* he is not convinced, and yet he is afraid of looking into the thing. Such characters always yield to those who will take the trouble of governing them, or for them. Perhaps, the influence of a princess, whose choice of him had royalized his state, may be some little excuse for Albany's weakness.

Ib. sc. 5.

"*Lear.* O let me not be mad, not mad, sweet heaven!
Keep me in temper! I would not be mad!—"

The mind's own anticipation of madness! The deepest tragic notes are often struck by a half sense of an impending blow. The Fool's conclusion of this act by a grot-

prattling seems to indicate the dislocation of feeling that has begun and is to be continued.

Act ii. sc. 1. Edmund's speech:—

> "He replied,
> Thou unpossessing bastard!" &c.

Thus the secret poison in Edmund's own heart steals forth; and then observe poor Gloster's—

> "Loyal and *natural* boy!"

as if praising the crime of Edmund's birth!

Ib. Compare Regan's—

> "What, did *my father's* godson seek your life?
> He whom *my father* named?"

with the unfeminine violence of her—

> "All vengeance comes too short," &c.

and yet no reference to the guilt, but only to the accident, which she uses as an occasion for sneering at her father. Regan is not, in fact, a greater monster than Goneril, but she has the power of casting more venom.

Ib. sc. 2. Cornwall's speech:—

> "This is some fellow,
> Who, having been praised for bluntness, doth affect
> A saucy roughness," &c.

In thus placing these profound general truths in the mouths of such men as Cornwall, Edmund, Iago, &c., Shakspere at once gives them utterance, and yet shows how indefinite their application is.

Ib. sc. 3. Edgar's assumed madness serves the great purpose of taking off part of the shock which would otherwise be caused by the true madness of Lear, and further displays the profound difference between the two. In every attempt at representing madness throughout the whole range of dramatic literature, with the single excep-

tion of Lear, it is mere lightheadedness, as especially in Otway. In Edgar's ravings Shakspere all the while lets you see a fixed purpose, a practical end in view;—in Lear's, there is only the brooding of the one anguish, an eddy without progression.

Ib. sc. 4. Lear's speech:—

> "The king would speak with Cornwall; the dear father
> Would with his daughter speak," &c.
> * * * * *
> "No, but not yet: may be he is not well," &c.

The strong interest now felt by Lear to try to find excuses for his daughter is most pathetic.

Ib. Lear's speech:—

> "——— Beloved Regan,
> Thy sister's naught;—O Regan, she hath tied
> Sharp-tooth'd unkindness, like a vulture, here.
> I can scarce speak to thee;—thou'lt not believe
> Of[1] how depraved a quality—O Regan!
> *Reg.* I pray you, Sir, take patience; I have hope,
> You less know how to value her desert,
> Than she to scant her duty.
> *Lear.* Say, how is that?"

Nothing is so heart-cutting as a cold unexpected defence or palliation of a cruelty passionately complained of, or so expressive of thorough hard-heartedness. And feel the excessive horror of Regan's "O, Sir, you are old!"—and then her drawing from that universal object of reverence and indulgence the very reason for her frightful conclusion—

> "Say, you have wrong'd her!"

All Lear's faults increase our pity for him. We refuse to know them otherwise than as means of his sufferings, and aggravations of his daughter's ingratitude.

Ib. Lear's speech:—

[1] Read "with."

"O, reason not the need: our basest beggars
Are in the poorest thing superfluous," &c.

Observe that the tranquillity which follows the first stunning of the blow permits Lear to reason.

Act iii. sc. 4. O, what a world's convention of agonies is here! All external nature in a storm, all moral nature convulsed,—the real madness of Lear, the feigned madness of Edgar, the babbling of the Fool, the desperate fidelity of Kent—surely such a scene was never conceived before or since! Take it but as a picture for the eye only, it is more terrific than any which a Michel Angelo, inspired by a *Dante*, could have conceived, and which none but a Michel Angelo could have executed. Or let it have been uttered to the blind, the howlings of nature would seem converted into the voice of conscious humanity. This scene ends with the first symptoms of positive derangement; and the intervention of the fifth scene is particularly judicious,—the interruption allowing an interval for Lear to appear in full madness in the sixth scene.

Ib. sc. 7. Gloster's blinding:—

What can I say of this scene?—There is my reluctance to think Shakspere wrong, and yet—

Act iv. sc. 6. Lear's speech:—

"Ha! Goneril!—with a white beard!—They flattered me like a dog; and told me, I had white hairs in my beard, ere the black ones were there. To say *Ay* and *No* to every thing[1] I said!—Ay and No too was no good divinity. When the rain came to wet me once," &c.

The thunder recurs, but still at a greater distance from our feelings.

Ib. sc. 7. Lear's speech:—

"Where have I been? Where am I?—Fair daylight?—
I am mightily abused.—I should even die with pity
To see another thus," &c.

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[1] Read "thing that I."

How beautifully the affecting return of Lear to reason, and the mild pathos of these speeches prepare the mind for the last sad, yet sweet, consolation of the aged sufferer's death!

Hamlet.

["Hamlet" was the play, or rather Hamlet himself was the character, in the intuition and exposition of which I first made my turn for philosophical criticism, and especially for insight into the genius of Shakspere, noticed. This happened first amongst my acquaintances, as Sir George Beaumont will bear witness: and subsequently, long before[1] Schlegel had delivered at Vienna the lectures on Shakspere, which he afterwards published. I had given on the same subject eighteen lectures substantially the same, proceeding from the very same point of view, and deducing the same conclusions, so far as I either then agreed, or now agree, with him. I gave these lectures at the Royal Institution, before six or seven hundred auditors of rank and eminence, in the spring of the same year, in which Sir Humphry Davy, a fellow-lecturer, made his great revolutionary discoveries in chemistry. Even in detail the coincidence of Schlegel with my lectures was so extraordinary, that all who at a later period[2] heard the same words, taken by me from my notes

[1] This "*long* before" must be set down to a little excitement (for more of which, see succeeding sentence, commencing "Mr. Hazlitt"), if we were right, and there can be no doubt, in considering Coleridge's first lectures at the Royal Institution, to have been those of 1806-8. See Lectures of 1811-12, Introductory Matter, § 5. Coleridge's statements vary only in seeming. In the letter of Feb. 1818 (see Lecture IX., of 1811-12) he says Schlegel's lectures "were not given orally till two years after mine." This gives 1806. In the note in the text, "in the spring of the same year," &c., refers to 1807. But it clearly *was* "before." Schlegel's lectures were delivered at Vienna during the year 1808, and published the year following. (*Volesungen über dramatische Kunst und Literatur*, 1809, 3 vols.)

Schlegel was, by five years, Coleridge's senior, having been born in 1767. He was professor at Jena when Coleridge was in Germany.

[2] Coleridge lectured at the Royal Institution in 1810.

of the lectures at the Royal Institution, concluded a borrowing on my part from Schlegel. Mr. Hazlitt, whose hatred of me is in such an inverse ratio to my zealous kindness towards him, as to be defended by his warmest admirer, Charles Lamb—(who, God bless him! besides his characteristic obstinacy of adherence to old friends, as long at least as they are at all down in the world, is linked as by a charm to Hazlitt's conversation)—only as "frantic;"—Mr. Hazlitt I say, himself replied to an assertion of my plagiarism from Schlegel in these words;—"That is a lie; for I myself heard the very same character of Hamlet from Coleridge before he went to Germany, and when he had neither read nor could read a page of German!" Now Hazlitt was on a visit to me at my cottage at Nether Stowey, Somerset, in the summer of the year 1798, in the September of which year I first was out of sight of the shores of Great Britain. Recorded by me, S. T. Coleridge, 7th January, 1819.]

The seeming inconsistencies in the conduct and character of Hamlet have long exercised the conjectural ingenuity of critics; and, as we are always loth to suppose that the cause of defective apprehension is in ourselves, the mystery has been too commonly explained by the very easy process of setting it down as in fact inexplicable, and by resolving the phenomenon into a misgrowth or *lusus* of the capricious and irregular genius of Shakspere. The shallow and stupid arrogance of these vulgar and indolent decisions I would fain do my best to expose. I believe the character of Hamlet may be traced to Shakspere's deep and accurate science in mental philosophy. Indeed, that this character must have some connection with the common fundamental laws of our nature may be assumed from the fact, that Hamlet has been the darling of every country in which the literature of England has been fostered. In order to understand him, it is essential that we should reflect on the constitution of our own minds. Man is distinguished from the brute animals in proportion as thought prevails over sense: but in the healthy processes of the mind, a balance is constantly maintained between the impressions from out-

ward objects and the inward operations of the intellect;—for if there be an overbalance in the contemplative faculty, man thereby becomes the creature of mere meditation, and loses his natural power of action. Now one of Shakspere's modes of creating characters is, to conceive any one intellectual or moral faculty in morbid excess, and then to place himself, Shakspere, thus mutilated or diseased, under given circumstances. In Hamlet he seems to have wished to exemplify the moral necessity of a due balance between our attention to the objects of our senses, and our meditation on the workings of our minds,—an *equilibrium* between the real and the imaginary worlds. In Hamlet this balance is disturbed: his thoughts, and the images of his fancy, are far more vivid than his actual perceptions, and his very perceptions, instantly passing through the *medium* of his contemplations, acquire, as they pass, a form and a colour not naturally their own. Hence we see a great, an almost enormous, intellectual activity, and a proportionate aversion to real action consequent upon it, with all its symptoms and accompanying qualities. This character Shakspere places in circumstances, under which it is obliged to act on the spur of the moment:—Hamlet is brave and careless of death; but he vacillates from sensibility, and procrastinates from thought, and loses the power of action in the energy of resolve. Thus it is that this tragedy presents a direct contrast to that of "Macbeth;" the one proceeds with the utmost slowness, the other with a crowded and breathless rapidity.

The effect of this overbalance of the imaginative power is beautifully illustrated in the everlasting broodings and superfluous activities of Hamlet's mind, which, unseated from its healthy relation, is constantly occupied with the world within, and abstracted from the world without,—giving substance to shadows, and throwing a mist over all common-place actualities. It is the nature of thought to

be indefinite;—definiteness belongs to external imagery alone. Hence it is that the sense of sublimity arises, not from the sight of an outward object, but from the beholder's reflection upon it;—not from the sensuous impression, but from the imaginative reflex. Few have seen a celebrated waterfall without feeling something akin to disappointment: it is only subsequently that the image comes back full into the mind, and brings with it a train of grand or beautiful associations. Hamlet feels this; his senses are in a state of trance, and he looks upon external things as hieroglyphics. His soliloquy—

"O! that this too too solid flesh would melt," &c.

springs from that craving after the indefinite—for that which is not—which most easily besets men of genius; and the self-delusion common to this temper of mind is finely exemplified in the character which Hamlet gives of himself:—

"It cannot be
But I am pigeon-liver'd, and lack gall
To make oppression bitter."

He mistakes the seeing his chains for the breaking them, delays action till action is of no use, and dies the victim of mere circumstance and accident.

There is a great significancy in the names of Shakspere's plays. In the "Twelfth Night," "Midsummer Night's Dream," "As You Like It," and "Winter's Tale," the total effect is produced by a co-ordination of the characters as in a wreath of flowers. But in "Coriolanus," "Lear," "Romeo and Juliet," "Hamlet," "Othello," &c., the effect arises from the subordination of all to one, either as the prominent person, or the principal object. "Cymbeline" is the only exception; and even that has its advantages in preparing the audience for the chaos of time, place, and

costume, by throwing the date back into a fabulous king's reign.

But as of more importance, so more striking, is the judgment displayed by our truly dramatic poet, as well as poet of the drama, in the management of his first scenes. With the single exception of "Cymbeline," they either place before us at one glance both the past and the future in some effect, which implies the continuance and full agency of its cause, as in the feuds and party-spirit of the servants of the two houses in the first scene of "Romeo and Juliet;" or in the degrading passion for shows and public spectacles, and the overwhelming attachment for the newest successful war-chief in the Roman people, already become a populace, contrasted with the jealousy of the nobles in "Julius Cæsar;"—or they at once commence the action so as to excite a curiosity for the explanation in the following scenes, as in the storm of wind and waves and the boatswain in the "Tempest," instead of anticipating our curiosity, as in most other first scenes, and in too many other first acts;—or they act, by contrast of diction suited to the characters, at once to heighten the effect, and yet to give a naturalness to the language and rhythm of the principal personages, either as that of Prospero and Miranda by the appropriate lowness of the style,—or as in "King John," by the equally appropriate stateliness of official harangues or narratives, so that the after blank verse seems to belong to the rank and quality of the speakers, and not to the poet;—or they strike at once the key-note, and give the predominant spirit of the play, as in the "Twelfth Night," and in "Macbeth;"—or finally, the first scene comprises all these advantages at once, as in "Hamlet."

Compare the easy language of common life, in which this drama commences, with the direful music and wild wayward rhythm and abrupt lyrics of the opening of

"Macbeth." The tone is quite familiar;—there is no poetic description of night, no elaborate information conveyed by one speaker to another of what both had immediately before their senses—(such as the first distich in Addison's "Cato,[1] which is a translation into poetry of "Past four o'clock and a dark morning!");—and yet nothing bordering on the comic on the one hand, nor any striving of the intellect on the other. It is precisely the language of sensation among men who feared no charge of effeminacy, for feeling what they had no want of resolution to bear. Yet the armour, the dead silence, the watchfulness that first interrupts it, the welcome relief of the guard, the cold, the broken expressions of compelled attention to bodily feelings still under control—all excellently accord with, and prepare for, the after gradual rise into tragedy;—but, above all, into a tragedy, the interest of which is as eminently *ad et apud intra*, as that of "Macbeth" is directly *ad extra*.

In all the best attested stories of ghosts and visions, as in that of Brutus, of Archbishop Cranmer, that of Benvenuto Cellini recorded by himself, and the vision of Galileo communicated by him to his favourite pupil Torricelli, the ghost-seers were in a state of cold or chilling damp from without, and of anxiety inwardly. It has been with all of them as with Francisco on his guard,—alone, in the depth and silence of the night;—"'twas bitter cold, and they were sick at heart, and *not a mouse stirring*." The attention to minute sounds,—naturally associated with the recollection of minute objects, and the more familiar and trifling, the more impressive from the unusualness of their producing any impression at all—gives a philosophic per-

[1] "The dawn is overcast, the morning lowers,
And heavily in clouds brings on the day,
The great, the important day, big with the fate
Of Cato and of Rome."

tinency to this last image; but it has likewise its dramatic use and purpose. For its commonness in ordinary conversation tends to produce the sense of reality, and at once hides the poet, and yet approximates the reader or spectator to that state in which the highest poetry will appear, and in its component parts, though not in the whole composition, really is, the language of nature. If I should not speak it, I feel that I should be thinking it;—the voice only is the poet's,—the words are my own. That Shakspere meant to put an effect in the actor's power in the very first words—"Who's there?"—is evident from the impatience expressed by the startled Francisco in the words that follow—"Nay, answer me: stand and unfold yourself." A brave man is never so peremptory, as when he fears that he is afraid. Observe the gradual transition from the silence and the still recent habit of listening in Francisco's —"I think I hear them"—to the more cheerful call out, which a good actor would observe, in the—"Stand ho! Who is there?" Bernardo's inquiry after Horatio, and the repetition of his name and in his own presence, indicate a respect or an eagerness that implies him as one of the persons who are in the foreground; and the scepticism attributed to him,—

> "Horatio says, 'tis but our fantasy;
> And will not let belief take hold of him—"

prepares us for Hamlet's after eulogy on him as one whose blood and judgment were happily commingled. The actor should also be careful to distinguish the expectation and gladness of Bernardo's "Welcome, Horatio!" from the mere courtesy of his "Welcome, good Marcellus!"

Now observe the admirable indefiniteness of the first opening out of the occasion of all this anxiety. The preparation informative of the audience is just as much as was precisely necessary, and no more:—it begins with the uncertainty appertaining to a question:—

"*Mar.* What, has *this thing* appear'd again to-night?—"

Even the word "again" has its *credibilizing* effect. Then Horatio, the representative of the ignorance of the audience, not himself, but by Marcellus to Bernardo, anticipates the common solution—"'tis but our fantasy!" upon which Marcellus rises into

"This dreaded sight, twice seen of us—"

which immediately afterwards becomes "this apparition," and that, too, an intelligent spirit, that is, to be spoken to! Then comes the confirmation of Horatio's disbelief;—

"Tush! tush! 'twill not appear!—"

and the silence, with which the scene opened, is again restored in the shivering feeling of Horatio sitting down, at such a time, and with the two eye-witnesses, to hear a story of a ghost, and that, too, of a ghost which had appeared twice before at the very same hour. In the deep feeling which Bernardo has of the solemn nature of what he is about to relate, he makes an effort to master his own imaginative terrors by an elevation of style,—itself a continuation of the effort,—and by turning off from the apparition, as from something which would force him too deeply into himself, to the outward objects, the realities of nature, which had accompanied it:—

"*Ber.* Last night of all,
When yon same star, that's westward from the pole,
Had made his course to illume that part of heaven
Where now it burns, Marcellus and myself,
The bell then beating one——"

This passage seems to contradict the critical law that what is told, makes a faint impression compared with what is beholden; for it does indeed convey to the mind more than the eye can see; whilst the interruption of the narrative at the very moment, when we are most intensely

listening for the sequel, and have our thoughts diverted from the dreaded sight in expectation of the desired, yet almost dreaded, tale—this gives all the suddenness and surprise of the original appearance ;—

"*Mar.* Peace, break thee off; look, where it comes again!—"

Note the judgment displayed in having the two persons present, who, as having seen the Ghost before, are naturally eager in confirming their former opinions,—whilst the sceptic is silent, and after having been twice addressed by his friends, answers with two hasty syllables—"Most like," —and a confession of horror :

"— It harrows me with fear and wonder."

O heaven! words are wasted on those who feel, and to those who do not feel the exquisite judgment of Shakspere in this scene, what can be said?—Hume himself could not but have had faith in this Ghost dramatically, let his anti-ghostism have been as strong as Samson against other ghosts less powerfully raised.

Act i. sc. 1.

"*Mar.* Good now, sit down, and tell me, he that knows,
Why this same strict and most observant watch," &c.

How delightfully natural is the transition to the retrospective narrative! And observe, upon the Ghost's re-appearance, how much Horatio's courage is increased by having translated the late individual spectator into general thought and past experience,—and the sympathy of Marcellus and Bernardo with his patriotic surmises in daring to strike at the Ghost; whilst in a moment, upon its vanishing, the former solemn awe-stricken feeling returns upon them :—

"We do it wrong, being so majestical,
To offer it the show of violence,—"

Ib. Horatio's speech :—

"I have heard,
The cock, that is the trumpet to the morn,
Doth with his lofty and shrill-sounding throat
Awake the god of day," &c.

No Addison could be more careful to be poetical in diction than Shakspere in providing the grounds and sources of its propriety. But how to elevate a thing almost mean by its familiarity, young poets may learn in this treatment of the cock-crow.

Ib. Horatio's speech:—

"And, by my advice,
Let us impart what we have seen to-night
Unto young Hamlet; for, upon my life,
The[1] spirit, dumb to us, will speak to him."

Note the inobtrusive and yet fully adequate mode of introducing the main character, "young Hamlet," upon whom is transferred all the interest excited for the acts and concerns of the king his father.

Ib. sc. 2. The audience are now relieved by a change of scene to the royal court, in order that "Hamlet" may not have to take up the leavings of exhaustion. In the king's speech, observe the set and pedantically antithetic form of the sentences when touching that which galled the heels of conscience,—the strain of undignified rhetoric,—and yet in what follows concerning the public weal, a certain appropriate majesty. Indeed was he not a royal brother?—

Ib. King's speech:—

"And now, Laertes, what's the news with you?" &c.

Thus with great art Shakspere introduces a most important, but still subordinate character first, Laertes, who is yet thus graciously treated in consequence of the assistance

[1] Read "this."

given to the election of the late king's brother instead of his son by Polonius.

Ib.

"*Ham.* A little more than kin, and less than kind.
King. How is it that the clouds still hang on you?
Ham. Not so, my lord, I am too much i' the sun."

Hamlet opens his mouth with a playing on words, the complete absence of which throughout characterizes "Macbeth." This playing on words may be attributed to many causes or motives, as either to an exuberant activity of mind, as in the higher comedy of Shakspere generally;—or to an imitation of it as a mere fashion, as if it were said—"Is not this better than groaning?"—or to a contemptuous exultation in minds vulgarized and overset by their success, as in the poetic instance of Milton's Devils in the battle;—or it is the language of resentment, as is familiar to every one who has witnessed the quarrels of the lower orders, where there is invariably a profusion of punning invective, whence, perhaps, nicknames have in a considerable degree sprung up;—or it is the language of suppressed passion, and especially of a hardly smothered personal dislike. The first, and last of these combine in Hamlet's case; and I have little doubt that Farmer is right in supposing the equivocation carried on in the expression "too much i' the sun," or son.

Ib.

"*Ham.* Ay, madam, it is common."

Here observe Hamlet's delicacy to his mother, and how the suppression prepares him for the overflow in the next speech, in which his character is more developed by bringing forward his aversion to externals, and which betrays his habit of brooding over the world within him, coupled with a prodigality of beautiful words, which are the half embodyings of thought, and are more than thought, and

have an outness, a reality *sui generis*, and yet retain their correspondence and shadowy affinity to the images and movements within. Note also Hamlet's silence to the long speech of the king which follows, and his respectful, but general, answer to his mother.

Ib. Hamlet's first soliloquy:—

> "O, that this too too solid flesh would melt,
> Thaw, and resolve itself into a dew!" &c.

This *tædium vitæ* is a common oppression on minds cast in the Hamlet mould, and is caused by disproportionate mental exertion, which necessitates exhaustion of bodily feeling. Where there is a just coincidence of external and internal action, pleasure is always the result; but where the former is deficient, and the mind's appetency of the ideal is unchecked, realities will seem cold and unmoving. In such cases, passion combines itself with the indefinite alone. In this mood of his mind the relation of the appearance of his father's spirit in arms is made all at once to Hamlet:—it is—Horatio's speech, in particular—a perfect model of the true style of dramatic narrative;—the purest poetry, and yet in the most natural language, equally remote from the ink-horn and the plough.

Ib. sc. 3. This scene must be regarded as one of Shakspere's lyric movements in the play, and the skill with which it is interwoven with the dramatic parts is peculiarly an excellence of our poet. You experience the sensation of a pause without the sense of a stop. You will observe in Ophelia's short and general answer to the long speech of Laertes the natural carelessness of innocence, which cannot think such a code of cautions and prudences necessary to its own preservation.

Ib. Speech of Polonius:—(in Stockdale's edition.)

> "Or (not to crack the wind of the poor phrase,)
> Wronging it thus, you'll tender me a fool."

I suspect this "wronging" is here used much in the same sense as "wringing" or "wrenching;" and that the parenthesis should be extended to "thus."[1]

Ib. Speech of Polonius:—

"—— How prodigal the soul
Lends the tongue vows:—these blazes, daughter," &c.

A spondee has, I doubt not, dropped out of the text. Either insert "Go to" after "vows;"—

"Lends the tongue vows:—Go to, these blazes, daughter—"

or read

"Lends the tongue vows:—These blazes, daughter, mark you—"

Shakspere never introduces a catalectic line without intending an equivalent to the foot omitted in the pauses, or the dwelling emphasis, or the diffused retardation. I do not, however, deny that a good actor might, by employing the last mentioned means, namely, the retardation, or solemn knowing drawl, supply the missing spondee with good effect. But I do not believe that in this or any other of the foregoing speeches of Polonius, Shakspere meant to bring out the senility or weakness of that personage's mind. In the great ever-recurring dangers and duties of life, where to distinguish the fit objects for the application of the maxims collected by the experience of a long life, requires no fineness of tact, as in the admonitions to his son and daughter, Polonius is uniformly made respectable. But if an actor were even capable of catching these shades in the character, the pit and the gallery would be malcontent at their exhibition. It is to Hamlet that Polonius is, and is meant to be, contemptible, because in inwardness and uncontrollable activity of movement, Hamlet's

[1] It is so pointed in the modern editions.—H. N. C. As also in the 2nd Quarto, 1604, which has "wrong," and in the 1st Fol. 1623, which has "roaming." The Globe Ed. prints "running."

mind is the logical contrary to that of Polonius, and besides, as I have observed before, Hamlet dislikes the man, as false to his true allegiance in the matter of the succession to the crown.

Ib. sc. 4. The unimportant conversation with which this scene opens is a proof of Shakspere's minute knowledge of human nature. It is a well established fact, that on the brink of any serious enterprise, or event of moment, men almost invariably endeavour to elude the pressure of their own thoughts by turning aside to trivial objects and familiar circumstances: thus this dialogue on the platform begins with remarks on the coldness of the air, and inquiries, obliquely connected, indeed, with the expected hour of the visitation, but thrown out in a seeming vacuity of topics, as to the striking of the clock and so forth. The same desire to escape from the impending thought is carried on in Hamlet's account of, and moralizing on, the Danish custom of wassailing: he runs off from the particular to the universal, and, in his repugnance to personal and individual concerns, escapes, as it were, from himself in generalizations, and smothers the impatience and uneasy feelings of the moment in abstract reasoning. Besides this, another purpose is answered;—for by thus entangling the attention of the audience in the nice distinctions and parenthetical sentences of this speech of Hamlet's, Shakspere takes them completely by surprise on the appearance of the Ghost, which comes upon them in all the suddenness of its visionary character. Indeed, no modern writer would have dared, like Shakspere, to have preceded this last visitation by two distinct appearances,—or could have contrived that the third should rise upon the former two in impressiveness and solemnity of interest.

But in addition to all the other excellencies of Hamlet's speech concerning the wassail-music—so finely revealing the predominant idealism, the ratiocinative meditativeness,

of his character—it has the advantage of giving nature and probability to the impassioned continuity of the speech instantly directed to the Ghost. The *momentum* had been given to his mental activity; the full current of the thoughts and words had set in, and the very forgetfulness, in the fervour of his argumentation, of the purpose for which he was there, aided in preventing the appearance from benumbing the mind. Consequently, it acted as a new impulse,—a sudden stroke which increased the velocity of the body already in motion, whilst it altered the direction. The co-presence of Horatio, Marcellus, and Bernardo is most judiciously contrived; for it renders the courage of Hamlet and his impetuous eloquence perfectly intelligible. The knowledge,—the unthought of consciousness,—the sensation,—of human auditors,—of flesh and blood sympathists—acts as a support and a stimulation *a tergo*, while the front of the mind, the whole consciousness of the speaker, is filled, yea, absorbed, by the apparition. Add too, that the apparition itself has by its previous appearances been brought nearer to a thing of this world. This accrescence of objectivity in a Ghost that yet retains all its ghostly attributes and fearful subjectivity, is truly wonderful.

Ib. sc. 5. Hamlet's speech:—

> "O all you host of heaven! O earth! What else?
> And shall I couple hell?—"

I remember nothing equal to this burst unless it be the first speech of Prométheus in the Greek drama, after the exit of Vulcan and the two Afrites. But Shakspere alone could have produced the vow of Hamlet to make his memory a blank of all maxims and generalized truths, that "observation had copied there,"—followed immediately by the speaker noting down the generalized fact,

> "That one may smile, and smile, and be a villain!"

Ib.

"*Mar.* Hillo, ho, ho, my lord!
Ham. Hillo, ho, ho, boy! come bird, come," &c.

This part of the scene after Hamlet's interview with the Ghost has been charged with an improbable eccentricity. But the truth is, that after the mind has been stretched beyond its usual pitch and tone, it must either sink into exhaustion and inanity, or seek relief by change. It is thus well known that persons conversant in deeds of cruelty, contrive to escape from conscience, by connecting something of the ludicrous with them, and by inventing grotesque terms and a certain technical phraseology to disguise the horror of their practices. Indeed, paradoxical as it may appear, the terrible by a law of the human mind always touches on the verge of the ludicrous. Both arise from the perception of something out of the common order of things—something, in fact, out of its place; and if from this we can abstract danger, the uncommonness will alone remain, and the sense of the ridiculous be excited. The close alliance of these opposites—they are not contraries—appears from the circumstance, that laughter is equally the expression of extreme anguish and horror as of joy: as there are tears of sorrow and tears of joy, so is there a laugh of terror and a laugh of merriment. These complex causes will naturally have produced in Hamlet the disposition to escape from his own feelings of the overwhelming and supernatural by a wild transition to the ludicrous,[1] —a sort of cunning bravado, bordering on the flights of delirium. For you may, perhaps, observe that Hamlet's

[1] A similar recourse to an antic ludicrousness in Hamlet, as an outlet for over-excitement, occurs when the king turns sick at the poisoning in the play. This involuntary evidence of guilt causes Hamlet to exclaim (or to sing,—and we can almost figure him dancing about),

"For thou must know, O Damon dear," &c.

Act iii. *sc.* 2.

wildness is but half false; he plays that subtle trick of pretending to act only when he is very near really being what he acts.

The subterraneous speeches of the Ghost are hardly defensible:—but I would call your attention to the characteristic difference between this Ghost, as a superstition connected with the most mysterious truths of revealed religion,—and Shakspere's consequent reverence in his treatment of it,—and the foul earthly witcheries and wild language in "Macbeth."

Act ii. sc. 1. Polonius and Reynaldo.

In all things dependent on, or rather made up of, fine address, the manner is no more or otherwise remembrable than the light motions, steps, and gestures of youth and health. But this is almost everything:—no wonder, therefore, if that which can be put down by rule in the memory should appear to us as mere poring, maudlin, cunning,—slyness blinking through the watery eye of superannuation. So in this admirable scene, Polonius, who is throughout the skeleton of his own former skill and statecraft, hunts the trail of policy at a dead scent, supplied by the weak fever-smell in his own nostrils.

Ib. sc. 2. Speech of Polonius:—

"My liege, and madam, to expostulate," &c.

Warburton's note:

"Then as to the jingles, and play on words, let us but look into the sermons of Dr. Donne (the wittiest man of that age), and we shall find them full of this vein."

I have, and that most carefully, read Dr. Donne's sermons, and find none of these jingles. The great art of an orator—to make whatever he talks of appear of importance—this, indeed, Donne has effected with consummate skill.

Ib.

"*Ham.* Excellent well;
You are a fishmonger."

That is, you are sent to fish out this secret. This is Hamlet's own meaning.

Ib.

"*Ham.* For if the sun breeds maggots in a dead dog,
Being a god, kissing carrion—"

These purposely obscure lines, I rather think, refer to some thought in Hamlet's mind, contrasting the lovely daughter with such a tedious old fool, her father, as he, Hamlet, represents Polonius to himself:—"Why, fool as he is, he is some degrees in rank above a dead dog's carcase; and if the sun, being a god that kisses carrion, can raise life out of a dead dog,—why may not good fortune, that favours fools, have raised a lovely girl out of this dead-alive old fool?" Warburton is often led astray, in his interpretations, by his attention to general positions without the due Shaksperian reference to what is probably passing in the mind of his speaker, characteristic, and expository of his particular character and present mood. The subsequent passage,—

"O Jephtha, judge of Israel! what a treasure hadst thou!"

is confirmatory of my view of these lines.

Ib.

"*Ham.* You cannot, Sir, take from me anything that I will more willingly part withal; except my life, except my life, except my life."

This repetition strikes me as most admirable.

Ib.

"*Ham.* Then are our beggars, bodies; and our monarchs, and out-stretched heroes, the beggars' shadows."

I do not understand this; and Shakspere seems to h

intended the meaning not to be more than snatched at:—"By my fay, I cannot reason!"

Ib.

"The rugged Pyrrhus—he whose sable arms," &c.

This admirable substitution of the epic for the dramatic, giving such a reality to the impassioned dramatic diction of Shakspere's own dialogue, and authorized, too, by the actual style of the tragedies before his time ("Porrex and Ferrex,"[1] "Titus Andronicus," &c.)—is well worthy of notice. The fancy, that a burlesque was intended, sinks below criticism: the lines, as epic narrative, are superb.

In the thoughts, and even in the separate parts of the diction, this description is highly poetical: in truth, taken by itself, this is its fault that it is too poetical!—the language of lyric vehemence and epic pomp, and not of the drama. But if Shakspere had made the diction truly dramatic, where would have been the contrast between "Hamlet" and the play in "Hamlet?"

Ib.

"—— had seen the *mobled* queen," &c.

A mob-cap is still a word in common use for a morning cap, which conceals the whole head of hair, and passes under the chin. It is nearly the same as the night-cap, that is, it is an imitation of it, so as to answer the purpose ("I am not drest for company"), and yet reconciling it with neatness and perfect purity.

Ib. Hamlet's soliloquy:

"O, what a rogue and peasant slave am I!" &c.

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[1] The earliest known English tragedy. "The tragedie of Ferrex and Porrex," acted "before the Queene's Maiestie" on "the xviij day of Januarie, 1561, by the gentlemen of the Inner Temple," and first published in 1570.

This is Shakspere's own attestation to the truth of the idea of Hamlet which I have before put forth.

Ib.

> "The spirit that I have seen,
> May be a [1] devil: and the devil hath power
> To assume a pleasing shape; yea, and, perhaps
> Out of my weakness, and my melancholy,
> (As he is very potent with such spirits)
> Abuses me to damn me."

See Sir Thomas Brown:

"I believe ——— that those apparitions and ghosts of departed persons are not the wandering souls of men, but the unquiet walks of devils, prompting and suggesting us unto mischief, blood, and villany; instilling and stealing into our hearts, that the blessed spirits are at rest in their graves, but wanner solicitors of the affairs of the world."—*Relig. Med.* Pt. I. Sect. 37.

Act iii. sc. 1.

> "To be, or not to be, that is the question," &c.

This speech is of absolutely universal interest,—and yet to which of all Shakspere's characters could it have been appropriately given but to Hamlet? For Jaques it would have been too deep, and for Iago too habitual a communion with the heart; which in every man belongs, or ought to belong, to all mankind.

Ib.

> "That undiscover'd country, from whose bourne
> No traveller returns.—"

Theobald's note in defence of the supposed contradiction of this in the apparition of the Ghost.

O miserable defender! If it be necessary to remove the apparent contradiction,—if it be not rather a great beauty,

[1] Quarto of 1604, "a deale;" 1st Fol. "the Divell;" Globe Ed. "the devil."

—surely, it were easy to say, that no traveller returns to this world, as to his home, or abiding-place.

Ib.

"*Ham.* Ha, ha! are you honest?
Oph. My lord?
Ham. Are you fair?"

Here it is evident that the penetrating Hamlet perceives, from the strange and forced manner of Ophelia, that the sweet girl was not acting a part of her own, but was a decoy; and his after speeches are not so much directed to her as to the listeners and spies. Such a discovery in a mood so anxious and irritable accounts for a certain harshness in him;—and yet a wild up-working of love, sporting with opposites in a wilful self-tormenting strain of irony, is perceptible throughout. "I did love you once:"—"I loved you not:"—and particularly in his enumeration of the faults of the sex from which Ophelia is so free, that the mere freedom therefrom constitutes her character. Note Shakspere's charm of composing the female character by the absence of characters, that is, marks and out-juttings.

Ib. Hamlet's speech:—

"I say, we will have no more marriages: those that are married already, all but one, shall live: the rest shall keep as they are."

Observe this dallying with the inward purpose, characteristic of one who had not brought his mind to the steady acting point. He would fain sting the uncle's mind;—but to stab his body!—The soliloquy of Ophelia, which follows, is the perfection of love—so exquisitely unselfish!

Ib. sc. 2. This dialogue of Hamlet with the players is one of the happiest instances of Shakspere's power of diversifying the scene while he is carrying on the plot.

Ib.

"*Ham.* My lord, you play'd once i' the university, you say? (*To Polonius.*)

To have kept Hamlet's love for Ophelia before the audience in any direct form, would have made a breach in the unity of the interest;—but yet to the thoughtful reader it is suggested by his spite to poor Polonius, whom he cannot let rest.

Ib. The style of the interlude here is distinguished from the real dialogue by rhyme, as in the first interview with the players by epic verse.

Ib.

> "*Ros.* My lord, you once did love me.
> *Ham.* *So* I do still, by these pickers and stealers."

I never heard an actor give this word "so" its proper emphasis. Shakspere's meaning is—"loved you? Hum! —*so* I do still, &c." There has been no change in my opinion:—I think as ill of you as I did. Else Hamlet tells an ignoble falsehood, and a useless one, as the last speech to Guildenstern—"Why, look you now," &c.—proves.

Ib. Hamlet's soliloquy:—

> "Now could I drink hot blood,
> And do such business as the bitter day[1]
> Would quake to look on."

The utmost at which Hamlet arrives, is a disposition, a mood, to do something:—but what to do, is still left undecided, while every word he utters tends to betray his disguise. Yet observe how perfectly equal to any call of the moment is Hamlet, let it only not be for the future.

Ib. sc. 4. Speech of Polonius. Polonius's volunteer obtrusion of himself into this business, while it is appropriate to his character, still itching after former importance, removes all likelihood that Hamlet should suspect his

[1] So, Quarto of 1604. The 1st Fol. and Globe Ed. read
"And do such bitter business as the day."

presence, and prevents us from making his death injure Hamlet in our opinion.

Ib. The king's speech:—

"O, my offence is rank, it smells to heaven," &c.

This speech well marks the difference between crime and guilt of habit. The conscience here is still admitted to audience. Nay, even as an audible soliloquy, it is far less improbable than is supposed by such as have watched men only in the beaten road of their feelings. But the final—"all may be well!" is remarkable;—the degree of merit attributed by the self-flattering soul to its own struggle, though baffled, and to the indefinite half-promise, half-command, to persevere in religious duties. The solution is in the divine *medium* of the Christian doctrine of expiation:—not what you have done, but what you are, must determine.

Ib. Hamlet's speech:—

"Now might I do it, pat, now he is praying:
And now I'll do it:—And so he goes to heaven:
And so am I revenged? That would be scann'd," &c.

Dr. Johnson's mistaking of the marks of reluctance and procrastination for impetuous, horror-striking, fiendishness! —Of such importance is it to understand the germ of a character. But the interval taken by Hamlet's speech is truly awful! And then—

"My words fly up, my thoughts remain below:
Words, without thoughts, never to heaven go,"—

O what a lesson concerning the essential difference between wishing and willing, and the folly of all motive-mongering, while the individual self remains!

Ib. sc. 4.

"*Ham.* A bloody deed;—almost as bad, good mother,
As kill a king, and marry with his brother.
Queen. As kill a king?"

I confess that Shakspere has left the character of the Queen in an unpleasant perplexity. Was she, or was she not, conscious of the fratricide?

Act iv. sc. 2.

"*Ros.* Take you me for a spunge, my lord?

Ham. Ay, Sir; that soaks up the King's countenance, his rewards, his authorities," &c.

Hamlet's madness is made to consist in the free utterance of all the thoughts that had passed through his mind before; —in fact, in telling home-truths.

Act iv. sc. 5. Ophelia's singing. O, note the conjunction here of these two thoughts that had never subsisted in disjunction, the love for Hamlet, and her filial love, with the guileless floating on the surface of her pure imagination of the cautions so lately expressed, and the fears not too delicately avowed, by her father and brother concerning the dangers to which her honour lay exposed. Thought, affliction, passion, murder itself—she turns to favour and prettiness. This play of association is instanced in the close:—

"My brother shall know of it, and I thank you for your good counsel."

Ib. Gentleman's speech:—

> "And as the world were now but to begin,
> Antiquity forgot, custom not known,
> The ratifiers and props of every ward[1]—
> They cry," &c.

Fearful and self-suspicious as I always feel, when I seem to see an error of judgment in Shakspere, yet I cannot reconcile the cool, and, as Warburton calls it, "rational and consequential," reflection in these lines with the anonymousness, or the alarm, of this Gentleman or Messenger, as he is called in other editions.

[1] Read "word."

Ib. King's speech:—

> "There's such divinity doth hedge a king,
> That treason can but peep to what it would,
> Acts little of his will."

Proof, as indeed all else is, that Shakspere never intended us to see the King with Hamlet's eyes; though, I suspect, the managers have long done so.

Ib. Speech of Laertes:—

> "To hell, allegiance! vows, to the blackest devil!"
>
> "Laertes is a *good* character, but," &c. WARBURTON.

Mercy on Warburton's notion of goodness! Please to refer to the seventh scene of this act;—

> "I will do it;
> And for this purpose I'll anoint my sword," &c.

uttered by Laertes after the King's description of Hamlet;—

> "He being remiss,
> Most generous, and free from all contriving,
> Will not peruse the foils."

Yet I acknowledge that Shakspere evidently wishes, as much as possible, to spare the character of Laertes,—to break the extreme turpitude of his consent to become an agent and accomplice of the King's treachery;—and to this end he re-introduces Ophelia at the close of this scene to afford a probable stimulus of passion in her brother.

Ib. sc. 6. Hamlet's capture by the pirates. This is almost the only play of Shakspere, in which mere accidents, independent of all will, form an essential part of the plot;—but here how judiciously in keeping with the character of the over-meditative Hamlet, ever at last determined by accident or by a fit of passion!

Ib. sc. 7. Note how the King first awakens Laertes's vanity by praising the reporter, and then gratifies it by the report itself, and finally points it by—

"Sir, this report of his
Did Hamlet so envenom with his envy!"—

Ib. King's speech:

"For goodness, growing to a *pleurisy*,
Dies in his own too much."

Theobald's note from Warburton, who conjectures "plethory."

I rather think that Shakspere meant "pleurisy," but involved in it the thought of *plethora*, as supposing pleurisy to arise from too much blood; otherwise I cannot explain the following line—

"And then this *should* is like a spendthrift sigh,
That hurts by easing."

In a stitch in the side every one must have heaved a sigh that "hurt by easing."

Since writing the above I feel confirmed that "pleurisy" is the right word; for I find that in the old medical dictionaries the pleurisy is often called the "plethory."

Ib.

"*Queen*. Your sister's drown'd, Laertes.
Laer. Drown'd! O, where?"

That Laertes might be excused in some degree for not cooling, the Act concludes with the affecting death of Ophelia,—who in the beginning lay like a little projection of land into a lake or stream, covered with spray-flowers quietly reflected in the quiet waters, but at length is undermined or loosened, and becomes a faery isle, and after a brief vagrancy sinks almost without an eddy!

Act v. sc. 1. O, the rich contrast between the Clowns and Hamlet, as two extremes! You see in the former the mockery of logic, and a traditional wit valued, like truth, for its antiquity, and treasured up, like a tune, for use.

Ib. sc. 1 and 2. Shakspere seems to mean all Hamlet's

character to be brought together before his final disappearance from the scene;—his meditative excess in the grave-digging, his yielding to passion with Laertes, his love for Ophelia blazing out, his tendency to generalize on all occasions in the dialogue with Horatio, his fine gentlemanly manners with Osrick, and thus and Shakspere's own fondness for prestatement:

"But thou would'st not think, how ill all's here about my heart: but it is no matter."

Macbeth.

Macbeth stands in contrast throughout with "Hamlet;" in the manner of opening more especially. In the latter, there is a gradual ascent from the simplest forms of conversation to the language of impassioned intellect,—yet the intellect still remaining the seat of passion: in the former, the invocation is at once made to the imagination and the emotions connected therewith. Hence the movement throughout is the most rapid of all Shakspere's plays; and hence also, with the exception of the disgusting passage of the Porter (Act ii. sc. 3), which I dare pledge myself to demonstrate to a sane interpretation of the actors, there is not (to the best of my remembrance) a single pun or play on words in the whole drama. I have previously given an answer to the thousand times repeated charge against Shakspere upon the subject of his punning, and I here merely mention the fact of the absence of any puns in "Macbeth," as justifying a second doubt, at least, whether even in these figures of speech and fanciful modifications

[1] It is strange that Coleridge did not see the absolute necessity of interposing just such a scene between the murder and discovery of it, to relieve the terrible strain on the mind of the audience,—and even might we not add, on the dramatic powers of the poet?

of language, Shakspere may not have followed rules and principles that merit and would stand the test of philosophic examination. And hence, also, there is an entire absence of comedy, nay, even of irony and philosophic contemplation, in "Macbeth,"—the play being wholly and purely tragic. For the same cause, there are no reasonings of equivocal morality, which would have required a more leisurely state and a consequently greater activity of mind:—no sophistry of self-delusion,—except only that previously to the dreadful act, Macbeth mistranslates the recoilings and ominous whispers of conscience into prudential and selfish reasonings, and, after the deed done, the terrors of remorse into fear from external dangers,—like delirious men who run away from the phantoms of their own brains, or, raised by terror to rage, stab the real object that is within their reach:—whilst Lady Macbeth merely endeavours to reconcile his and her own sinkings of heart by anticipations of the worst, and an affected bravado in confronting them. In all the rest, Macbeth's language is the grave utterance of the very heart, conscience-sick, even to the last faintings of moral death. It is the same in all the other characters. The variety arises from rage, caused ever and anon by disruption of anxious thought, and the quick transition of fear into it.

In "Hamlet" and "Macbeth" the scene opens with superstition; but, in each it is not merely different, but opposite. In the first it is connected with the best and holiest feelings; in the second with the shadowy, turbulent, and unsanctified cravings of the individual will. Nor is the purpose the same; in the one the object is to excite, whilst in the other it is to mark a mind already excited. Superstition, of one sort or another, is natural to victorious generals; the instances are too notorious to need mentioning. There is so much of chance in warfare, and such vast events are connected with the acts of a single individual,—

the representative, in truth, of the efforts of myriads, and yet to the public and, doubtless, to his own feelings, the aggregate of all,—that the proper temperament for generating or receiving superstitious impressions is naturally produced. Hope, the master element of a commanding genius, meeting with an active and combining intellect, and an imagination of just that degree of vividness which disquiets and impels the soul to try to realize its images, greatly increases the creative power of the mind; and hence the images become a satisfying world of themselves, as is the case in every poet and original philosopher:—but hope fully gratified, and yet the elementary basis of the passion remaining, becomes fear; and, indeed, the general, who must often feel, even though he may hide it from his own consciousness, how large a share chance had in his successes, may very naturally be irresolute in a new scene, where he knows that all will depend on his own act and election.

The Weird Sisters are as true a creation of Shakspere's, as his Ariel and Caliban,—fates, furies, and materializing witches being the elements. They are wholly different from any representation of witches in the contemporary writers, and yet presented a sufficient external resemblance to the creatures of vulgar prejudice to act immediately on the audience. Their character consists in the imaginative disconnected from the good; they are the shadowy obscure and fearfully anomalous of physical nature, the lawless of human nature,—elemental avengers without sex or kin:

> "Fair is foul, and foul is fair;
> Hover thro' the fog and filthy air."

How much it were to be wished in playing "Macbeth," that an attempt should be made to introduce the flexile character-mask of the ancient pantomime;—that Flaxman would contribute his genius to the embodying and making sensuously perceptible that of Shakspere!

The style and rhythm of the Captain's speeches in the second scene should be illustrated by reference to the interlude in "Hamlet," in which the epic is substituted for the tragic, in order to make the latter be felt as the real-life diction. In "Macbeth," the poet's object was to raise the mind at once to the high tragic tone, that the audience might be ready for the precipitate consummation of guilt in the early part of the play. The true reason for the first appearance of the Witches is to strike the key-note of the character of the whole drama, as is proved by their re-appearance in the third scene, after such an order of the king's as establishes their supernatural power of information. I say information,—for so it only is as to Glamis and Cawdor; the "king hereafter" was still contingent,—still in Macbeth's moral will; although, if he should yield to the temptation, and thus forfeit his free agency, the link of cause and effect *more physico* would then commence. I need not say, that the general idea is all that can be required from the poet,—not a scholastic logical consistency in all the parts so as to meet metaphysical objectors. But O! how truly Shaksperian is the opening of Macbeth's character given in the *unpossessedness* of Banquo's mind, wholly present to the present object,—an unsullied, unscarified mirror!—And how strictly true to nature it is, that Banquo, and not Macbeth himself, directs our notice to the effect produced on Macbeth's mind, rendered susceptible by previous dalliance of the fancy with ambitious thoughts:

> "Good Sir, why do you start; and seem to fear
> Things that do sound so fair?"

And then, again, still unintroitive, addresses the Witches:—

> "I' the name of truth,
> Are ye fantastical, or that indeed
> Which outwardly ye show?"

Banquo's questions are those of natural curiosity,—such as a girl would put after hearing a gipsy tell her schoolfellow's fortune;—all perfectly general, or rather planless. But Macbeth, lost in thought, raises himself to speech only by the Witches being about to depart:—

"Stay, you imperfect speakers, tell me more:—"

and all that follows is reasoning on a problem already discussed in his mind,—on a hope which he welcomes, and the doubts concerning the attainment of which he wishes to have cleared up. Compare his eagerness,—the keen eye with which he has pursued the Witches evanishing—

"Speak, I charge you!"

with the easily satisfied mind of the self-uninterested Banquo:—

"The air[1] hath bubbles, as the water has,
And these are of them:—Whither are they vanish'd?"

and then Macbeth's earnest reply,—

"Into the air; and what seem'd corporal, melted
As breath into the wind.—*Would they had staid!*"

Is it too minute to notice the appropriateness of the simile "as breath," &c., in a cold climate?

Still again Banquo goes on wondering like any common spectator:

"Were such things here as we do speak about?"

whilst Macbeth persists in recurring to the self-concerning:—

"Your children shall be kings.
Ban. You shall be king.
Macb. And thane of Cawdor too: went it not so?"

So surely is the guilt in its germ anterior to the supposed

[1] Read "earth."

cause, and immediate temptation! Before he can cool, the confirmation of the tempting half of the prophecy arrives, and the concatenating tendency of the imagination is fostered by the sudden coincidence:—

> "Glamis, and thane of Cawdor:
> The greatest is behind."

Oppose this to Banquo's simple surprise:—

> "What, can the devil speak true?"

Ib. Banquo's speech:—

> "That, trusted home,
> Might yet enkindle you unto the crown,
> Besides the thane of Cawdor."

I doubt whether "enkindle" has not another sense than that of "stimulating;" I mean of "kind" and "kin," as when rabbits are said to "kindle." However, Macbeth no longer hears anything *ab extra*:—

> "Two truths are told,
> As happy prologues to the swelling act
> Of the imperial theme."

Then in the necessity of recollecting himself—

> "I thank you, gentlemen."

Then he relapses into himself again, and every word of his soliloquy shows the early birth-date of his guilt. He is all-powerful without strength; he wishes the end, but is irresolute as to the means; conscience distinctly warns him, and he lulls it imperfectly:—

> "If chance will have me king, why, chance may crown me
> Without my stir."

Lost in the prospective of his guilt, he turns round alarmed lest others may suspect what is passing in his own mind, and instantly vents the lie of ambition:

"My dull brain was wrought
With things *forgotten*;—

And immediately after pours forth the promising courtesies of a usurper in intention:—

"Kind gentlemen, your pains
Are register'd where every day I turn
The leaf to read them."

Ib. Macbeth's speech:

"Present *fears*
Are less than horrible imaginings."

Warburton's note, and substitution of "feats" for "fears."

Mercy on this most wilful ingenuity of blundering, which, nevertheless, was the very Warburton of Warburton—his inmost being! "Fears," here, are present fear-striking objects, *terribilia adstantia*.

Ib. sc. 4. O! the affecting beauty of the death of Cawdor, and the presentimental speech of the king:

"There's no art
To find the mind's construction in the face:
He was a gentleman on whom I built
An absolute trust—"

Interrupted by—

"O worthiest cousin!"

on the entrance of the deeper traitor for whom Cawdor had made way! And here in contrast with Duncan's "plenteous joys," Macbeth has nothing but the common-places of loyalty, in which he hides himself, with "our duties." Note the exceeding effort of Macbeth's addresses to the king, his reasoning on his allegiance, and then especially when a new difficulty, the designation of a successor, suggests a new crime. This, however, seems the first distinct notion, as to the plan of realizing his wishes; and here, therefore, with great propriety, Macbeth's cowardice of his own conscience discloses itself. I always think there is something especially Shaksperian in Duncan's speeches

throughout this scene, such pourings forth, such abandonments, compared with the language of vulgar dramatists, whose characters seem to have made their speeches as the actors learn them.

Ib. Duncan's speech:—

> "Sons, kinsmen, thanes,
> And you whose places are the nearest, know,
> We will establish our estate upon
> Our eldest Malcolm, whom we name hereafter
> The Prince of Cumberland: which honour must
> Not unaccompanied, invest him only;
> But signs of nobleness, like stars, shall shine
> On all deservers."

It is a fancy;—but I can never read this and the following speeches of Macbeth, without involuntarily thinking of the Miltonic Messiah and Satan.

Ib. sc. 5. Macbeth is described by Lady Macbeth so as at the same time to reveal her own character. Could he have everything he wanted, he would rather have it innocently;—ignorant, as alas! how many of us are, that he who wishes a temporal end for itself, does in truth will the means; and hence the danger of indulging fancies. Lady Macbeth, like all in Shakspere, is a class individualized:—of high rank, left much alone, and feeding herself with day-dreams of ambition, she mistakes the courage of fantasy for the power of bearing the consequences of the realities of guilt. Hers is the mock fortitude of a mind deluded by ambition; she shames her husband with a superhuman audacity of fancy which she cannot support, but sinks in the season of remorse, and dies in suicidal agony. Her speech:

> "Come, all you spirits
> That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here," &c.

is that of one who had habitually familiarized her imagination to dreadful conceptions, and was trying to do so still more. Her invocations and requisitions are all the false

efforts of a mind accustomed only hitherto to the shadows of the imagination, vivid enough to throw the every-day substances of life into shadow, but never as yet brought into direct contact with their own correspondent realities. She evinces no womanly life, no wifely joy, at the return of her husband, no pleased terror at the thought of his past dangers; whilst Macbeth bursts forth naturally—

"My dearest love"—

and shrinks from the boldness with which she presents his own thoughts to him. With consummate art she at first uses as incentives the very circumstances, Duncan's coming to their house, &c., which Macbeth's conscience would most probably have adduced to her as motives of abhorrence or repulsion. Yet Macbeth is not prepared:

"We will speak further."

Ib. sc. 6. The lyrical movement with which this scene opens, and the free and unengaged mind of Banquo, loving nature, and rewarded in the love itself, form a highly dramatic contrast with the laboured rhythm and hypocritical over-much of Lady Macbeth's welcome, in which you cannot detect a ray of personal feeling, but all is thrown upon the "dignities," the general duty.

Ib. sc. 7. Macbeth's speech:

> "We will proceed no further in this business:
> He hath honour'd me of late; and I have bought
> Golden opinions from all sorts of people,
> Which would be worn now in their newest gloss,
> Not cast aside so soon."

Note the inward pangs and warnings of conscience interpreted into prudential reasonings.

Act ii. sc. 1. Banquo's speech:

> "A heavy summons lies like lead upon me,
> And yet I would not sleep. Merciful powers!
> Restrain in me the cursed thoughts, that nature
> Gives way to in repose."

The disturbance of an innocent soul by painful suspicions of another's guilty intentions and wishes, and fear of the cursed thoughts of sensual nature.

Ib. sc. 2. Now that the deed is done or doing—now that the first reality commences, Lady Macbeth shrinks. The most simple sound strikes terror, the most natural consequences are horrible, whilst previously everything, however awful, appeared a mere trifle: conscience, which before had been hidden to Macbeth in selfish and prudential fears, now rushes in upon him in her own veritable person:

> "Methought I heard a voice cry—Sleep no more!
> I could not say Amen,
> When they did say, God bless us!"

And see the novelty given to the most familiar images by a new state of feeling.

Ib. sc. 3. This low soliloquy of the Porter and his few speeches afterwards, I believe to have been written for the mob by some other hand, perhaps with Shakspere's consent; and that finding it take, he with the remaining ink of a pen otherwise employed, just interpolated the words—

> "I'll devil-porter it no further: I had thought to have let in some of all professions, that go the primrose way to th' everlasting bonfire."

Of the rest not one syllable has the ever-present being of Shakspere.

Act iii. sc. 1. Compare Macbeth's mode of working on the murderers in this place with Schiller's mistaken scene between Butler, Devereux, and Macdonald in "Wallenstein." (Part II. act iv. sc. 2.) The comic was wholly out of season. Shakspere never introduces it, but when it may react on the tragedy by harmonious contrast.

Ib. sc. 2. Macbeth's speech:

> "But let the frame of things disjoint, both the worlds suffer
> Ere we will eat our meal in fear, and sleep

In the affliction of these terrible dreams
That shake us nightly."

Ever and ever mistaking the anguish of conscience for fears of selfishness, and thus as a punishment of that selfishness, plunging still deeper in guilt and ruin.

Ib. Macbeth's speech:

"Be innocent of the knowledge, dearest chuck,
Till thou applaud the deed."

This is Macbeth's sympathy with his own feelings, and his mistaking his wife's opposite state.

Ib. sc. 4.

"*Macb.* It will have blood, they say; blood will have blood:
Stones have been known to move, and trees to speak;
Augurs, and understood relations, have
By magot-pies, and choughs, and rooks, brought forth
The secret'st man of blood."

The deed is done; but Macbeth receives no comfort,—no additional security. He has by guilt torn himself live-asunder from nature, and is, therefore, himself in a preternatural state: no wonder, then, that he is inclined to superstition, and faith in the unknown of signs and tokens, and super-human agencies.

Act iv. sc. 1.

"*Len.* 'Tis two or three, my lord, that bring you word,
Macduff is fled to England.
Macb. Fled to England?"

The acme of the avenging conscience.

Ib. sc. 2. This scene, dreadful as it is, is still a relief, because a variety, because domestic, and therefore soothing, as associated with the only real pleasures of life. The conversation between Lady Macduff and her child heightens the pathos, and is preparatory for the deep tragedy of their assassination. Shakspere's fondness for children is everywhere shown;—in Prince Arthur, in "King John;" in

the sweet scene in the "Winter's Tale" between Hermione and her son; nay, even in honest Evans's examination of Mrs. Page's schoolboy. To the objection that Shakspere wounds the moral sense by the unsubdued, undisguised description of the most hateful atrocity—that he tears the feelings without mercy, and even outrages the eye itself with scenes of insupportable horror—I, omitting "Titus Andronicus," as not genuine, and excepting the scene of Gloster's blinding in "Lear," answer boldly in the name of Shakspere, not guilty.

Ib. sc. 3. Malcolm's speech:

> "Better Macbeth,
> Than such a one to reign."

The moral is—the dreadful effects even on the best minds of the soul-sickening sense of insecurity.

Ib. How admirably Macduff's grief is in harmony with the whole play! It rends, not dissolves, the heart. "The tune of it goes manly." Thus is Shakspere always master of himself and of his subject,—a genuine Proteus:—we see all things in him, as images in a calm lake, most distinct, most accurate,—only more splendid, more glorified. This is correctness in the only philosophical sense. But he requires your sympathy and your submission; you must have that recipiency of moral impression without which the purposes and ends of the drama would be frustrated, and the absence of which demonstrates an utter want of all imagination, a deadness to that necessary pleasure of being innocently—shall I say, deluded?—or rather, drawn away from ourselves to the music of noblest thought in harmonious sounds. Happy he, who not only in the public theatre, but in the labours of a profession, and round the light of his own hearth, still carries a heart so pleasure-fraught!

Alas for Macbeth! Now all is inward with him; he

has no more prudential prospective reasonings. His wife, the only being who could have had any seat in his affections, dies; he puts on despondency, the final heart-armour of the wretched, and would fain think everything shadowy and unsubstantial, as indeed all things are to those who cannot regard them as symbols of goodness:—

> "Out, out, brief candle!
> Life's but a walking shadow; a poor player,
> That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,
> And then is heard no more: it is a tale
> Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
> Signifying nothing."

The Winter's Tale.[1]

Although, on the whole, this play is exquisitely respondent to its title, and even in the fault I am about to mention, still a winter's tale; yet it seems a mere indolence of the great bard not to have provided in the oracular response (Act iii. sc. 2.) some ground for Hermione's seeming death and fifteen years voluntary concealment. This might have been easily effected by some obscure sentence of the oracle, as for example:—

> "Nor shall he ever recover an heir, if he have a wife before that recovery."

The idea of this delightful drama is a genuine jealousy of disposition, and it should be immediately followed by the perusal of "Othello," which is the direct contrast of it in every particular. For jealousy is a vice of the mind, a culpable tendency of the temper, having certain well known

[1] Whoever it was that placed these notes on the "Winter's Tale" and those on "Othello" together, it is certain that Coleridge usually treated the plays together, in order to contrast the jealousy, usually so called, of Othello with that of Leontes. "Macbeth" is arranged with "Hamlet" for similar reasons.

and well defined effects and concomitants, all of which are visible in Leontes, and, I boldly say, not one of which marks its presence in "Othello;"—such as, first, an excitability by the most inadequate causes, and an eagerness to snatch at proofs; secondly, a grossness of conception, and a disposition to degrade the object of the passion by sensual fancies and images; thirdly, a sense of shame of his own feelings exhibited in a solitary moodiness of humour, and yet from the violence of the passion forced to utter itself, and therefore catching occasions to ease the mind by ambiguities, equivoques, by talking to those who cannot, and who are known not to be able to, understand what is said to them,—in short, by soliloquy in the form of dialogue, and hence a confused, broken, and fragmentary, manner; fourthly, a dread of vulgar ridicule, as distinct from a high sense of honour, or a mistaken sense of duty; and lastly, and immediately, consequent on this, a spirit of selfish vindictiveness.

Act i. sc. 1—2.

Observe the easy style of chitchat between Camillo and Archidamus as contrasted with the elevated diction on the introduction of the kings and Hermione in the second scene: and how admirably Polixenes' obstinate refusal to Leontes to stay—

> "There is no tongue that moves; none, none i' the world,
> So soon as yours, could win me;—"

prepares for the effect produced by his afterwards yielding to Hermione;—which is, nevertheless, perfectly natural from mere courtesy of sex, and the exhaustion of the will by former efforts of denial, and well calculated to set in nascent action the jealousy of Leontes. This, when once excited, is unconsciously increased by Hermione:—

> "Yet, good deed, Leontes,
> I love thee not a jar o' the clock behind
> What lady she her lord;—"

accompanied, as a good actress ought to represent it, by an expression and recoil of apprehension that she had gone too far.

"At my request, he would not:—"

The first working of the jealous fit;—

"Too hot, too hot:—"

The morbid tendency of Leontes to lay hold of the merest trifles, and his grossness immediately afterwards—

"Paddling palms and pinching fingers:—"

followed by his strange loss of self-control in his dialogue with the little boy.

Act iii. sc. 2. Paulina's speech:

"That thou betray'dst Polixenes, 'twas nothing;
That did but show thee, of a *fool*, inconstant,
And damnable ingrateful.—"

Theobald reads "soul."

I think the original word is Shakspere's. 1. My ear feels it to be Shaksperian; 2. The involved grammar is Shaksperian;—"show thee, being a fool naturally, to have improved thy folly by inconstancy;" 3. The alteration is most flat, and un-Shaksperian. As to the grossness of the abuse—she calls him "gross and foolish" a few lines below.

Act iv. sc. 2. Speech of Autolycus:—

"For the life to come, I sleep out the thought of it."

Fine as this is, and delicately characteristic of one who had lived and been reared in the best society, and had been precipitated from it by dice and drabbing; yet still it strikes against my feelings as a note out of tune, and as not coalescing with that pastoral tint which gives such a charm to this act. It is too Macbeth-like in the "snapper up of unconsidered trifles."

Ib. sc. 4. Perdita's speech :—

"From Dis's waggon! daffodils."

An epithet is wanted here, not merely or chiefly for the metre, but for the balance, for the æsthetic logic. Perhaps, "golden" was the word which would set off the "violets dim."

Ib. "Pale primroses
That die unmarried.—"

Milton's—

"And the rathe primrose that forsaken dies."

Ib. Perdita's speech :—

"Even here undone:
I was not much afraid;[1] for once or twice
I was about to speak, and tell him plainly,
The self-same sun, that shines upon his court,
Hides not his visage from our cottage, but
Looks on alike. Wilt please you, Sir, be gone!
(*To Florizel.*)
I told you, what would come of this. Beseech you,
Of your own state take care: this dream of mine,
Being[2] awake, I'll queen it no inch farther,
But milk my ewes, and weep."

O how more than exquisite is this whole speech!—And that profound nature of noble pride and grief venting themselves in a momentary peevishness of resentment toward Florizel :—

"—— Wilt please you, Sir, be gone!"

Ib. Speech of Antolycus :—

"Let me have no lying; it becomes none but tradesmen, and they often give us soldiers the lie; but we pay them for it in[3] stamped coin, not stabbing steel;—therefore they do not *give* us the lie."

As we *pay* them, they, therefore, do not *give* it us.

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[1] Read "afear'd." [2] Read "being now awake." [3] Read "with."

Othello.

Act i. sc. 1. Admirable is the preparation, so truly and peculiarly Shaksperian, in the introduction of Roderigo, as the dupe on whom Iago shall first exercise his art, and in so doing display his own character. Roderigo, without any fixed principle, but not without the moral notions and sympathies with honour, which his rank and connections had hung upon him, is already well fitted and predisposed for the purpose; for very want of character and strength of passion, like wind loudest in an empty house, constitute his character. The first three lines happily state the nature and foundation of the friendship between him and Iago,—the purse,—as also the contrast of Roderigo's intemperance of mind with Iago's coolness,—the coolness of a preconceiving experimenter. The mere language of protestation—

> "If ever I did dream of such a matter,
> Abhor me,—"

which falling in with the associative link, determines Roderigo's continuation of complaint—

> "Thou told'st me, thou didst hold him in thy hate—"

elicits at length a true feeling of Iago's mind, the dread of contempt habitual to those, who encourage in themselves, and have their keenest pleasure in, the expression of contempt for others. Observe Iago's high self-opinion, and the moral, that a wicked man will employ real feelings, as well as assume those most alien from his own, as instruments of his purposes:—

> "——— And, by the faith of man,
> I know my place,[1] I am worth no worse a place."

---

[1] Read "price."

I think Tyrwhitt's reading of "life" for "wife"

"A fellow almost damn'd in a fair *wife*"—

the true one, as fitting to Iago's contempt for what
not display power, and that intellectual power.
follows, let the reader feel how by and through the
of two passions, disappointed vanity and envy, the v
vices of which he is complaining, are made to act upon hi
as if they were so many excellencies, and the more appro-
priately, because cunning is always admired and wished
for by minds conscious of inward weakness;—but they act
only by half, like music on an inattentive auditor, swelling
the thoughts which prevent him from listening to it.

Ib.

"*Rod.* What a full fortune does the *thick-lips* owe,
If he can carry 't thus."

Roderigo turns off to Othello; and here comes one, if not the only, seeming justification of our blackamoor or negro Othello. Even if we supposed this an uninterrupted tradition of the theatre, and that Shakspere himself, from want of scenes, and the experience that nothing could be made too marked for the senses of his audience, had practically sanctioned it,—would this prove aught concerning his own intention as a poet for all ages? Can we imagine him so utterly ignorant as to make a barbarous negro plead royal birth,—at a time, too, when negroes were not known except as slaves?—As for Iago's language to Brabantio, it implies merely that Othello was a Moor, that is, black. Though I think the rivalry of Roderigo sufficient to account for his wilful confusion of Moor and Negro,—yet, even if compelled to give this up, I should think it only adapted for the acting of the day, and should complain of an enormity built on a single word, in direct contradiction to Iago's "Barbary horse." Besides, if we could in good earnest believe Shakspere ignorant of the distinction, still

uld we adopt one disagreeable possibility instead times greater and more pleasing probability? It mon error to mistake the epithets applied by the *personæ* to each other, as truly descriptive of what ence ought to see or know. No doubt Desdemona Othello's visage in his mind; yet, as we are constituted, most surely as an English audience was disposed in the eginning of the seventeenth century, it would be something monstrous to conceive this beautiful Venetian girl falling in love with a veritable negro. It would argue a disproportionateness, a want of balance, in Desdemona, which Shakspere does not appear to have in the least contemplated.

Ib. Brabantio's speech:—

"This accident is not unlike my dream:—"

The old careful senator, being caught careless, transfers his caution to his dreaming power at least.

Ib. Iago's speech:—

"— For their souls,
Another of his fathom they have not,
To lead their business:—"

The forced praise of Othello followed by the bitter hatred of him in this speech! And observe how Brabantio's dream prepares for his recurrence to the notion of philtres, and how both prepare for carrying on the plot of the arraignment of Othello on this ground.

Ib. sc. 2.

"*Oth.* 'Tis better as it is."

How well these few words impress at the outset the truth of Othello's own character of himself at the end—that he was "not easily wrought!" His self-government contradistinguishes him throughout from Leontes.

Ib. Othello's speech:—

"— And my demerits[1]
May speak, *unbonnetted*—"

The argument in Theobald's note, where "and bonnetted" is suggested, goes on the assumption that Shakspere could not use the same word differently in different places; whereas I should conclude, that as in the passage in "Lear" the word is employed in its direct meaning, so here it is used metaphorically; and this is confirmed by what has escaped the editors, that it is not "I," but "my demerits" that may speak unbonnetted,—without the symbol of a petitioning inferior.

Ib. sc. 3. Othello's speech:—

"Please[2] your grace, my ancient;
A man he is of honesty and trust:
To his conveyance I assign my wife."

Compare this with the behaviour of Leontes to his true friend Camillo.

Ib. sc. 5.

"*Bra.* Look to her, Moor; have a quick eye to see;
She has deceived her father, and may thee.
Oth. My life upon her faith."

In real life, how do we look back to little speeches as presentimental of, or contrasted with, an affecting event! Even so, Shakspere, as secure of being read over and over, of becoming a family friend, provides this passage for his readers, and leaves it to them.

Ib. Iago's speech:—

"Virtue? a fig! 'tis in ourselves, that we are thus, or thus," &c.

This speech comprises the passionless character of Iago. It is all will in intellect; and therefore he is here a bold

[1] "Demerits" had the same sense as "merits" in Shakspere's time. But see Section III., note on "Richard II.," Act i. sc. 3.

[2] Read "so please."

partizan of a truth, but yet of a truth converted into a falsehood by the absence of all the necessary modifications caused by the frail nature of man. And then comes the last sentiment,—

"Our raging motions, our carnal stings, our unbitted lusts, whereof I take this, that you call—love, to be a sect or scion!"

Here is the true Iagoism of, alas! how many! Note Iago's pride of mastery in the repetition of "Go, make money!" to his anticipated dupe, even stronger than his love of lucre: and when Roderigo is completely won—

"I am changed. I'll go sell all my land."

when the effect has been fully produced, the repetition of triumph—

"Go to; farewell; put money enough in your purse!"[1]

The remainder—Iago's soliloquy—the motive-hunting of a motiveless malignity—how awful it is! Yea, whilst he is still allowed to bear the divine image, it is too fiendish for his own steady view,—for the lonely gaze of a being next to devil, and only not quite devil,—and yet a character which Shakspere has attempted and executed, without disgust and without scandal!

Dr. Johnson has remarked that little or nothing is wanting to render the "Othello" a regular tragedy, but to have opened the play with the arrival of Othello in Cyprus, and to have thrown the preceding act into the form of narration. Here then is the place to determine, whether such a change would or would not be an improvement;—nay (to throw down the glove with a full challenge) whether the tragedy would or not by such an arrangement become more regular,

[1] The line in Shakspere is

"Go to; farewell. Do you hear, Roderigo?"

The words "put money enough in your purse,"—which, moreover, have not quite a Shakspere ring,—do not form part of the text.

—that is, more consonant with the rules dictated by universal reason, on the true common-sense of mankind, in its application to the particular case. For in all acts of judgment, it can never be too often recollected, and scarcely too often repeated, that rules are means to ends, and, consequently, that the end must be determined and understood before it can be known what the rules are or ought to be. Now, from a certain species of drama, proposing to itself the accomplishment of certain ends,—these partly arising from the idea of the species itself, but in part, likewise, forced upon the dramatist by accidental circumstances beyond his power to remove or control,—three rules have been abstracted;—in other words, the means most conducive to the attainment of the proposed ends have been generalized, and prescribed under the names of the three unities,—the unity of time, the unity of place, and the unity of action,—which last would, perhaps, have been as appropriately, as well as more intelligibly, entitled the unity of interest. With this last the present question has no immediate concern: in fact, its conjunction with the former two is a mere delusion of words. It is not properly a rule, but in itself the great end not only of the drama, but of the epic poem, the lyric ode, of all poetry, down to the candle-flame cone of an epigram,—nay of poesy in general, as the proper generic term inclusive of all the fine arts as its species. But of the unities of time and place, which alone are entitled to the name of rules, the history of their origin will be their best criterion. You might take the Greek chorus to a place, but you could not bring a place to them without as palpable an equivoque as bringing Birnam wood to Macbeth at Dunsinane.[1] It was the same, though in a less degree, with regard to the unity of time:—the positive fact, not for a moment removed from

[1] See concluding division of Section I.

the senses, the presence, I mean, of the same identical chorus, was a continued measure of time;—and although the imagination may supersede perception, yet it must be granted to be an imperfection—however easily tolerated—to place the two in broad contradiction to each other. In truth, it is a mere accident of terms; for the Trilogy of the Greek theatre was a drama in three acts, and notwithstanding this, what strange contrivances as to place there are in the Aristophanic Frogs. Besides, if the law of mere actual perception is once violated—as it repeatedly is even in the Greek tragedies—why is it more difficult to imagine three hours to be three years than to be a whole day and night?

Act ii. sc. 1.

Observe in how many ways Othello is made, first, our acquaintance, then our friend, then the object of our anxiety, before the deeper interest is to be approached!

Ib.

> "*Mont.* But, good lieutenant, is your general wived?
> *Cas.* Most fortunately: he hath achieved a maid
> That paragons description, and wild fame;
> One that excels the quirks of blazoning pens,
> And, in the essential vesture of creation,
> Does bear all excellency.[1]

Here is Cassio's warm-hearted, yet perfectly disengaged, praise of Desdemona, and sympathy with the "most fortunately" wived Othello:—and yet Cassio is an enthusiastic admirer, almost a worshipper, of Desdemona. O, that detestable code that excellence cannot be loved in any form that is female, but it must needs be selfish! Observe Othello's "honest," and Cassio's "bold" Iago, and Cassio's full guileless-hearted wishes for the safety and love-raptures

[1] The reading of the Quartos. The Folios have "Does tire the ingeniver;" the Globe Ed. "ingener." "Ingene" meant "genius, wit," in Shakspere's day. See Nares' "Glossary."

of Othello and "the divine Desdemona." And also note the exquisite circumstance of Cassio's kissing Iago's wife, as if it ought to be impossible that the dullest auditor should not feel Cassio's religious love of Desdemona's purity. Iago's answers are the sneers which a proud bad intellect feels towards woman, and expresses to a wife. Surely it ought to be considered a very exalted compliment to women, that all the sarcasms on them in Shakspere are put in the mouths of villains.[1]

Ib.

"*Des.* I am not merry; but I do beguile," &c.

The struggle of courtesy in Desdemona to abstract her attention.

Ib.

"(*Iago aside.*) He takes her by the palm: Ay, well said, whisper; with as little a web as this, will I ensnare as great a fly as Cassio. Ay, smile upon her, do," &c.

The importance given to trifles, and made fertile by the villainy of the observer.

Ib. Iago's dialogue with Roderigo:

This is the rehearsal on the dupe of the traitor's intentions on Othello.

Ib. Iago's soliloquy:

"But partly led to diet my revenge,
For that I do suspect the lusty Moor
Hath leap'd into my seat."

This thought, originally by Iago's own confession a mere suspicion, is now ripening, and gnaws his base nature as his own "poisonous mineral" is about to gnaw the noble heart of his general.

Ib. sc. 3. Othello's speech:

[1] See similar remarks in the notes on "The Tempest."

"I know, Iago,
Thy honesty and love doth mince this matter,
Making it light to Cassio."

Honesty and love! Ay, and who but the reader of the play could think otherwise?

Ib. Iago's soliloquy:

"And what's he then that says—I play the villain?
When this advice is free I give, and honest,
Probable[1] to thinking, and, indeed, the course
To win the Moor again."

He is not, you see, an absolute fiend; or, at least, he wishes to think himself not so.

Act iii. sc. 3.

"*Des.* Before Æmilia here,
I give thee warrant of this[2] place."

The over-zeal of innocence in Desdemona.

Ib.

Enter Desdemona and Æmilia.

"*Oth.* If she be false, O, then, heaven mocks itself!
I'll not believe it."

Divine! The effect of innocence and the better genius!

Act iv. sc. 3.

"*Æmil.* Why, the wrong is but a wrong i' the world; and having the world for your labour, 'tis a wrong in your own world, and you might quickly make it right."

Warburton's note.

What any other man, who had learning enough, might have quoted as a playful and witty illustration of his remarks against the Calvinistic *thesis*, Warburton gravely attributes to Shakspere as intentional; and this, too, in the mouth of a lady's woman!

[1] All the early editions, and Globe Ed., read "proball." The word is not found elsewhere. (Nares' "Glossary.")

[2] Read "thy."

Act v. last scene. Othello's speech:—

"—— Of one, whose hand,
Like the base *Indian*, threw a pearl away
Richer than all his tribe," &c.

Theobald's note from Warburton:

Thus it is for no-poets to comment on the greatest of poets! To make Othello say that he, who had killed his wife, was like Herod who killed Mariamne!—O, how many beauties, in this one line, were impenetrable to the ever thought-swarming, but idealess, Warburton! Othello wishes to excuse himself on the score of ignorance, and yet not to excuse himself,—to excuse himself by accusing. This struggle of feeling is finely conveyed in the word "base," which is applied to the rude Indian, not in his own character, but as the momentary representative of Othello's. "Indian"—for I retain the old reading—means American, a savage *in genere*.

Finally, let me repeat that Othello does not kill Desdemona in jealousy,[1] but in a conviction forced upon him by the almost superhuman art of Iago,—such a conviction as any man would and must have entertained who had believed Iago's honesty as Othello did. We, the audience, know that Iago is a villain from the beginning; but in considering the essence of the Shaksperian Othello, we must perseveringly place ourselves in his situation, and under his circumstances. Then we shall immediately feel the fundamental difference between the solemn agony of the noble Moor, and the wretched fishing jealousies of Leontes, and the morbid suspiciousness of Leonatus, who is, in other respects, a fine character. Othello had no life but in Desdemona:—the belief that she, his angel, had fallen from the heaven of her native innocence, wrought a civil war in his heart. She is his counterpart; and, like

[1] See Appendix: V., *Othello*.

him, is almost sanctified in our eyes by her absolute unsuspiciousness, and holy entireness of love. As the curtain drops, which do we pity the most?

Extremum hunc ——[1]. There are three powers:—Wit, which discovers partial likeness hidden in general diversity; subtlety, which discovers the diversity concealed in general apparent sameness;—and profundity, which discovers an essential unity under all the semblances of difference.

Give to a subtle man fancy, and he is a wit; to a deep man imagination, and he is a philosopher. Add, again, pleasurable sensibility in the threefold form of sympathy with the interesting in morals, the impressive in form, and the harmonious in sound,—and you have the poet.

But combine all,—wit, subtlety, and fancy, with profundity, imagination, and moral and physical susceptibility of the pleasurable,—and let the object of action be man universal;[1] and we shall have—O, rash prophecy! say, rather, we have—a Shakspere!

[1] See opening remarks on Spenser, Appendix: III.

SECTION V.

JONSON, BEAUMONT, FLETCHER, AND MASSINGER.[1]

A CONTEMPORARY is rather an ambiguous term, when applied to authors. It may simply mean that one man lived and wrote while another was yet alive, however deeply the former may have been indebted to the latter as his model. There have been instances in the literary world that might remind a botanist of a singular sort of parasite plant, which rises above ground, independent and unsupported, an apparent original; but trace its roots, and you will find the fibres all terminating in the root of another plant at an unsuspected distance, which, perhaps, from want of sun and genial soil, and the loss of sap, has scarcely been able to peep above the ground.—Or the word may mean those whose compositions were contemporaneous in such a sense as to preclude all likelihood of the one having borrowed from the other. In the latter sense I should call Ben Jonson a contemporary of Shakspere, though he long survived him; while I should prefer the phrase of immediate successors for Beaumont and Fletcher, and Massinger, though they too were Shakspere's contemporaries in the former sense.

[1] We might reasonably have added to this heading, "as compared with Shakspere," for that is practically the main theme of the chapter. See Appendix: V., *Feb.* 17, 1833.

Ben Jonson.[1]

Born, 1574.—Died, 1637.

Ben Jonson is original; he is, indeed, the only one of the great dramatists of that day who was not either directly produced, or very greatly modified, by Shakspere. In truth, he differs from our great master in everything—in form and in substance—and betrays no tokens of his proximity. He is not original in the same way as Shakspere is original; but after a fashion of his own, Ben Jonson is most truly original.[2]

The characters in his plays are, in the strictest sense of the term, abstractions. Some very prominent feature is taken from the whole man, and that single feature or humour is made the basis upon which the entire character is built up. Ben Jonson's *dramatis personæ* are almost as fixed as the masks of the ancient actors; you know from the first scene—sometimes from the list of names—exactly what every one of them is to be. He was a very accurately observing man; but he cared only to observe what was external or open to, and likely to impress, the senses. He individualizes, not so much, if at all, by the exhibition of moral or intellectual differences, as by the varieties and contrasts of manners, modes of speech and tricks of temper; as in such characters as Puntarvolo, Bobadill, &c.

I believe there is not one whim or affectation in common life noted in any memoir of that age which may not be found drawn and framed in some corner or other of Ben Jonson's dramas; and they have this merit, in common

[1] From Mr. Green's note.—H. N. C.

[2] See Section VI.; notes on "Epicœne," and on "Bartholomew Fair."

with Hogarth's prints, that not a single circumstance is introduced in them which does not play upon, and help to bring out, the dominant humour or humours of the piece. Indeed I ought very particularly to call your attention to the extraordinary skill shown by Ben Jonson in contriving situations for the display of his characters. In fact, his care and anxiety in this matter led him to do what scarcely any of the dramatists of that age did—that is, invent his plots. It is not a first perusal that suffices for the full perception of the elaborate artifice of the plots of the "Alchemist" and the "Silent Woman;"—that of the former is absolute perfection for a necessary entanglement, and an unexpected, yet natural, evolution.

Ben Jonson exhibits a sterling English diction, and he has with great skill contrived varieties of construction; but his style is rarely sweet or harmonious, in consequence of his labour at point and strength being so evident. In all his works, in verse or prose, there is an extraordinary opulence of thought; but it is the produce of an amassing power in the author, and not of a growth from within. Indeed a large proportion of Ben Jonson's thoughts may be traced to classic or obscure modern writers, by those who are learned and curious enough to follow the steps of this robust, surly, and observing dramatist.

BEAUMONT. Born, 1586.—Died, 1616.

FLETCHER. Born, 1576.—Died, 1625.

Mr. Weber, to whose taste, industry, and appropriate erudition we owe, I will not say the best (for that would be saying little), but a good, edition of Beaumont and Fletcher, has complimented the "Philaster," which he himself describes as inferior to the "Maid's Tragedy" by the same

writers, as but little below the noblest of Shakspere's plays, "Lear," "Macbeth," Othello," &c., and consequently implying the equality, at least, of the "Maid's Tragedy;"—and an eminent living critic,—who in the manly wit, strong sterling sense, and robust style of his original works, had presented the best possible credentials of office as *chargé d'affaires* of literature in general,—and who by his edition of Massinger—a work in which there was more for an editor to do, and in which more was actually well done, than in any similar work within my knowledge—has proved an especial right of authority in the appreciation of dramatic poetry, and hath potentially a double voice with the public in his own right and in that of the critical synod, where, as *princeps senatus*, he possesses it by his prerogative,—has affirmed that Shakspere's superiority to his contemporaries rests on his superior wit alone, while in all the other, and, as I should deem, higher excellencies of the drama, character, pathos, depth of thought, &c., he is equalled by Beaumont and Fletcher, Ben Jonson, and Massinger![1]

Of wit I am engaged to treat in another Lecture. It is a genus of many species; and at present I shall only say, that the species which is predominant in Shakspere, is so completely Shaksperian, and in its essence so interwoven with all his other characteristic excellencies, that I am equally incapable of comprehending, both how it can be detached from his other powers, and how, being disparate in kind from the wit of contemporary dramatists, it can be compared with theirs in degree. And again—the detachment and the practicability of the comparison being granted—I should, I confess, be rather inclined to concede the contrary;—and in the most common species of wit, and in the ordinary application of the term, to yield this particular

[1] See Mr. Gifford's introduction to his edition of Massinger.—H. N. C.

palm to Beaumont and Fletcher, whom here and hereafter I take as one poet with two names,—leaving undivided what a rare love and still rarer congeniality have united. At least, I have never been able to distinguish the presence of Fletcher during the life of Beaumont, nor the absence of Beaumont during the survival of Fletcher.[1]

But waiving, or rather deferring, this question, I protest against the remainder of the position *in toto*. And indeed, whilst I can never, I trust, show myself blind to the various merits of Jonson, Beaumont and Fletcher, and Massinger, or insensible to the greatness of the merits which they possess in common, or to the specific excellencies which give to each of the three a worth of his own,—I confess, that one main object of this Lecture was to prove that Shakspere's eminence is his own, and not that of his age; —even as the pine-apple, the melon, and the gourd may grow on the same bed;—yea, the same circumstances of warmth and soil may be necessary to their full development, yet do not account for the golden hue, the ambrosial flavour, the perfect shape of the pine-apple, or the tufted crown on its head. Would that those, who seek to twist it off, could but promise us in this instance to make it the germ of an equal successor!

What had a grammatical and logical consistency for the ear,—what could be put together and represented to the eye—these poets took from the ear and eye, unchecked by any intuition of an inward impossibility;—just as a man might put together a quarter of an orange, a quarter of an apple, and the like of a lemon and a pomegranate, and make it look like one round diverse-coloured

[1] Beaumont was but thirty when he died, and Fletcher lived to be forty-nine. It is true, he was ten years older than Beaumont, but there are many plays well known to be by Fletcher only. A difference of style is written on their faces. See the portraits, in Mr. Dyce's edition, 11 vols.

fruit.[1] But nature, which works from within by evolution and assimilation according to a law, cannot do so, nor could Shakspere; for he too worked in the spirit of nature, by evolving the germ from within by the imaginative power according to an idea. For as the power of seeing is to light, so is an idea in mind to a law in nature. They are correlatives, which suppose each other.

The plays of Beaumont and Fletcher are mere aggregations without unity; in the Shaksperian drama there is a vitality which grows and evolves itself from within,—a key note which guides and controls the harmonies throughout. What is "Lear?"—It is storm and tempest—the thunder at first grumbling in the far horizon, then gathering around us, and at length bursting in fury over our heads,—succeeded by a breaking of the clouds for a while, a last flash of lightning, the closing in of night, and the single hope of darkness! And "Romeo and Juliet?"—It is a spring day, gusty and beautiful in the morn, and closing like an April evening with the song of the nightingale!—whilst "Macbeth" is deep and earthy,—composed to the subterranean music of a troubled conscience, which converts everything into the wild and fearful!

Doubtless from mere observation, or from the occasional similarity of the writer's own character, more or less in Beaumont and Fletcher and other such writers will happen to be in correspondence with nature, and still more in apparent compatibility with it. But yet the false source is always discoverable, first by the gross contradictions to nature in so many other parts, and secondly, by the want of the impression which Shakspere makes, that the thing said not only might have been said, but that nothing else could be substituted, so as to excite the same sense of its exquisite propriety. I have always thought the conduct

[1] See Appendix: V., *July* 1, 1833, and notes on the "Queen of Corinth," in Section VII.

and expressions of Othello and Iago in the last scene, when Iago is brought in prisoner, a wonderful instance of Shakspere's consummate judgment:—

"*Oth.* I look down towards his feet;—but that's a fable.
If that thou be'st a devil, I cannot kill thee.
Iago. I bleed, Sir; but not kill'd.
Oth. I am not sorry neither.

Think what a volley of execrations and defiances Beaumont and Fletcher would have poured forth here!

Indeed Massinger and Ben Jonson are both more perfect in their kind than Beaumont and Fletcher; the former in the story and affecting incidents; the latter in the exhibition of manners and peculiarities, whims in language, and vanities of appearance.

There is, however, a diversity of the most dangerous kind here. Shakspere shaped his characters out of the nature within; but we cannot so safely say, out of his own nature as an individual person. No! this latter is itself but a *natura naturata*,—an effect, a product, not a power. It was Shakspere's prerogative to have the universal, which is potentially in each particular, opened out to him, the *homo generalis*, not as an abstraction from observation of a variety of men, but as the substance capable of endless modifications, of which his own personal existence was but one, and to use this one as the eye that beheld the other, and as the tongue that could convey the discovery. There is no greater or more common vice in dramatic writers than to draw out of themselves. How I—alone and in the self-sufficiency of my study, as all men are apt to be proud in their dreams—should like to be talking *king!* Shakspere, in composing, had no *I*, but the *I* representative. In Beaumont and Fletcher you have descriptions of characters by the poet rather than the characters themselves; we are told, and impressively told, of their being; but we rarely or never feel that they actually are.

Beaumont and Fletcher are the most lyrical of our dramatists. I think their comedies the best part of their works, although there are scenes of very deep tragic interest in some of their plays. I particularly recommend Monsieur Thomas for good pure comic humour.

There is, occasionally, considerable license in their dramas; and this opens a subject much needing vindication and sound exposition, but which is beset with such difficulties for a Lecturer, that I must pass it by. Only as far as Shakspere is concerned, I own, I can with less pain admit a fault in him than beg an excuse for it. I will not, therefore, attempt to palliate the grossness that actually exists in his plays by the customs of his[1] age, or by the far greater coarseness of all his contemporaries, excepting Spenser, who is himself not wholly blameless, though nearly so;—for I place Shakspere's merit on being of no age. But I would clear away what is, in my judgment, not his, as that scene of the Porter in "Macbeth," and

[1] Yet he might well have done so.

The "Merry Wives of Windsor" was written, it is said, at the virgin Queen's request, and doubtless the poet wrote what he expected would please her. If a license of humour, no longer tolerated in polite society, was not the custom of the time, Hamlet's talk to Ophelia at the play is inexcusable; though it harmonizes easily enough with Shakspere's evident idea of Ophelia,—as simple, characterless, and sensuous. The porter's talk cannot be compared with it, because it is not addressed to a woman.

Coleridge starts with a theory. Then he says, in effect, "remove all that contradicts it, and it is established." Why did he not get over his difficulty, by recognizing—what is a fact—that the kind of *leste* humour we find in Shakspere *is* "of no age." It is endemic as well as epidemic. Furthermore, in Shakspere, if we may be allowed the expression, it never becomes unwholesome. Shakspere was not afraid to turn it to account. The narration of the death of Falstaff (Hen. V. Act. ii. § 3) becomes a masterpiece by a single stroke. See commencement of Section VI., and notes on "Valentinian," Act iii., in Section VII.; also, Appendix: V., *Mar.* 15, 1834.

many other such passages, and abstract what is coarse in manners only, and all that which from the frequency of our own vices, we associate with his words. If this were truly done, little that could be justly reprehensible would remain. Compare the vile comments, offensive and defensive, on Pope's

"Last thro' some gentle strainers," &c.

with the worst thing in Shakspere, or even in Beaumont and Fletcher; and then consider how unfair the attack is on our old dramatists; especially because it is an attack that cannot be properly answered in that presence in which an answer would be most desirable, from the painful nature of one part of the position; but this very pain is almost a demonstration of its falsehood!

MASSINGER.

Born at Salisbury, 1584.—Died, 1640.

With regard to Massinger, observe,

1. The vein of satire on the times; but this is not as in Shakspere, where the natures evolve themselves according to their incidental disproportions, from excess, deficiency, or mislocation, of one or more of the component elements; but is merely satire on what is attributed to them by others.

2. His excellent metre[1]—a better model for dramatists in general to imitate than Shakspere's,—even if a dramatic taste existed in the frequenters of the stage, and could be gratified in the present size and management, or rather mismanagement, of the two patent theatres. I do not

[1] See Section VII., notes on Harris's commendatory poem, and on the "Loyal Subject."

mean that Massinger's verse is superior to Shakspere's or equal to it. Far from it; but it is much more easily constructed and may be more successfully adopted by writers in the present day. It is the nearest approach to the language of real life at all compatible with a fixed metre. In Massinger, as in all our poets before Dryden, in order to make harmonious verse in the reading, it is absolutely necessary that the meaning should be understood;—when the meaning is once seen, than the harmony is perfect. Whereas in Pope and in most of the writers who followed in his school, it is the mechanical metre which determines the sense.

3. The impropriety, and indecorum of demeanour in his favourite characters, as in Bertoldo in the "Maid of Honour," who is a swaggerer, talking to his sovereign what no sovereign could endure, and to gentlemen what no gentleman would answer without pulling his nose.

4. Shakspere's Ague-cheek, Osric, &c., are displayed through others, in the course of social intercourse, by the mode of their performing some office in which they are employed; but Massinger's *Sylli* come forward to declare themselves fools *ad arbitrium auctoris*, and so the diction always needs the *subintelligitur* ("the man looks as if he thought so and so,") expressed in the language of the satirist, and not in that of the man himself:—

> "*Sylli.* You may, madam,
> Perhaps, believe that I in this use art
> To make you dote upon me, by exposing
> My more than most rare features to your view;
> But I, as I have ever done, deal simply,
> A mark of sweet simplicity, ever noted
> In the family of the Syllis. Therefore, lady,
> Look not with too much contemplation on me;
> If you do, you are in the suds."
>
> *Maid of Honour*, act i. sc. 2.

The author mixes his own feelings and judgments con-

cerning the presumed fool; but the man himself, till mad, fights up against them, and betrays, by his attempts to modify them, that he is no fool at all, but one gifted with activity and copiousness of thought, image and expression, which belong not to a fool, but to a man of wit making himself merry with his own character.

5. There is an utter want of preparation in the decisive acts of Massinger's characters, as in Camiola and Aurelia in the "Maid of Honour." Why? Because the *dramatis personæ* were all planned each by itself. Whereas in Shakspere, the play is *syngenesia*; each character has, indeed, a life of its own, and is an *individuum* of itself, but yet an organ of the whole, as the heart in the human body. Shakspere was a great comparative anatomist.

Hence Massinger and all, indeed, but Shakspere, take a dislike to their own characters, and spite themselves upon them by making them talk like fools or monsters; as Fulgentio in his visit to Camiola (Act ii. sc. 2). Hence too, in Massinger, the continued flings at kings, courtiers, and all the favourites of fortune, like one who had enough of intellect to see injustice in his own inferiority in the share of the good things of life, but not genius enough to rise above it, and forget himself. Beaumont and Fletcher have the same vice in the opposite pole, a servility of sentiment and a spirit of partizanship with the monarchical faction.

6. From the want of a guiding point in Massinger's characters, you never know what they are about. In fact they have no character.

7. Note the faultiness of his soliloquies, with connectives and arrangements, that have no other motive but the fear lest the audience should not understand him.

8. A play of Massinger's produces no one single effect, whether arising from the spirit of the whole, as in the "As You Like It;" or from any one indisputably pro-

minent character, as Hamlet. It is just "which you like best, gentlemen!"

9. The unnaturally irrational passions and strange whims of feeling which Massinger delights to draw, deprive the reader of all sound interest in the characters;—as in Mathias in the "Picture," and in other instances.[1]

10. The comic scenes in Massinger not only do not harmonize with the tragic, not only interrupt the feeling, but degrade the characters that are to form any part in the action of the piece, so as to render them unfit for any tragic interest. At least, they do not concern, or act upon, or modify, the principal characters. As when a gentleman is insulted by a mere blackguard,—it is the same as if any other accident of nature had occurred, a pig run under his legs, or his horse thrown him. There is no dramatic interest in it.

I like Massinger's comedies better than his tragedies, although where the situation requires it, he often rises into the truly tragic and pathetic. He excels in narration, and for the most part displays his mere story with skill. But he is not a poet of high imagination; he is like a Flemish painter, in whose delineations objects appear as they do in nature, have the same force and truth, and produce the same effect upon the spectator. But Shakspere is beyond this;—he always by metaphors and figures involves in the thing considered a universe of past and possible experiences; he mingles earth, sea and air, gives a soul to everything, and at the same time that he inspires human feelings, adds a dignity in his images to human nature itself:—

> "Full many a glorious morning have I seen
> Flatter the mountain tops with sovereign eye;
> Kissing with golden face the meadows green,
> Gilding pale streams with heavenly alchymy," &c.
>
> 33rd Sonnet.

[1] See Appendix: V., *April* 5, 1833.

Note.—Have I not over-rated Gifford's edition of Massinger?—Not,—if I have, as but just is, main reference to the restitution of the text; but yes, perhaps, if I were talking of the notes. These are more often wrong than right. In the "Maid of Honour," Act. i. sc. 5, Astutio describes Fulgentio as "A gentleman, yet no lord." Gifford supposes a transposition of the press for "No gentleman, yet a lord." But this would have no connection with what follows; and we have only to recollect that "lord" means a lord of lands, to see that the after lines are explanatory. He is a man of high birth, but no landed property;—as to the former, he is a distant branch of the blood royal;—as to the latter, his whole rent lies in a narrow compass, the king's ear! In the same scene the text stands:

> "*Bert.* No! they are useful
> For your *imitation*;—I remember you, &c.;—"

and Gifford condemns Mason's conjecture of "initiation" as void of meaning and harmony. Now my ear deceives me if "initiation" be not the right word. In fact, "imitation" is utterly impertinent to all that follows. Bertoldo tells Antonio that he had been initiated in the manners suited to the court by two or three sacred beauties, and that a similar experience would be equally useful for his initiation into the camp. Not a word of his imitation. Besides, I say the rhythm requires "initiation," and is lame as the verse now stands.

SECTION VI.

NOTES ON BEN JONSON.

IT would be amusing to collect out of our dramatists from Elizabeth to Charles I. proofs of the manners of the times. One striking symptom of general coarseness of manners, which may co-exist with great refinement of morals, as, alas! *vice versa*, is to be seen in the very frequent allusions to the olfactories with their most disgusting stimulants, and these, too, in the conversation of virtuous ladies. This would not appear so strange to one who had been on terms of familiarity with Sicilian and Italian women of rank: and bad as they may, too many of them, actually be, yet I doubt not that the extreme grossness of their language has impressed many an Englishman of the present era with far darker notions than the same language would have produced in the mind of one of Elizabeth's, or James's courtiers. Those who have read Shakspere only, complain of occasional grossness in his plays; but compare him with his contemporaries, and the inevitable conviction is, that of the exquisite purity of his imagination.[1]

The observation I have prefixed to the "Volpone" is the key to the faint interest which these noble efforts of intellectual power excite, with the exception of the fragment of the "Sad Shepherd;" because in that piece only is there any

[1] See Section V., and note.

character with whom you can morally sympathize. On the other hand, "Measure for Measure" is the only play of Shakspere's in which there are not some one or more characters, generally many, whom you follow with affectionate feeling. For I confess that Isabella, of all Shakspere's female characters, pleases me the least; and "Measure for Measure" is, indeed, the only one of his genuine works, which is painful to me.[1]

Let me not conclude this remark, however, without a thankful acknowledgment to the *manes* of Ben Jonson, that the more I study his writings, I the more admire them; and the more my study of him resembles that of an ancient classic, in the *minutiæ* of his rhythm, metre, choice of words, forms of connection, and so forth, the more numerous have the points of my admiration become. I may add, too, that both the study and the admiration cannot but be disinterested, for to expect therefrom any advantage to the present drama would be ignorance. The latter is utterly heterogeneous from the drama of the Shaksperian age, with a diverse object and contrary principle. The one was to present a model by imitation of real life, taking from real life all that in it which it ought to be, and supplying the rest;—the other is to copy what is, and as it is,—at best a tolerable, but most frequently a blundering, copy. In the former the difference was an essential element; in the latter an involuntary defect. We should think it strange, if a tale in dance were announced, and the actors did not dance at all;—and yet such is modern comedy.

Whalley's Preface.

"But Jonson was soon sensible, how inconsistent this medley of names and manners was in reason and nature; and with how little

[1] See Appendix: V., *June* 24, 1827.

propriety it could ever have a place in a legitimate and just picture of real life."

But did Jonson reflect that the very essence of a play, the very language in which it is written, is a fiction to which all the parts must conform? Surely, Greek manners in English should be a still grosser improbability than a Greek name transferred to English manners. Ben's *personæ* are too often not characters, but derangements;—the hopeless patients of a mad-doctor rather,—exhibitions of folly betraying itself in spite of existing reason and prudence. He not poetically, but painfully exaggerates every trait; that is, not by the drollery of the circumstance, but by the excess of the originating feeling.

"But to this we might reply, that far from being thought to build his characters upon abstract ideas, he was really accused of representing particular persons then existing; and that even those characters which appear to be the most exaggerated, are said to have had their respective archetypes in nature and life."

This degrades Jonson into a libeller, instead of justifying him as a dramatic poet. *Non quod verum est, sed quod verisimile*, is the dramatist's rule. At all events, the poet who chooses transitory manners, ought to content himself with transitory praise. If his object be reputation, he ought not to expect fame. The utmost he can look forwards to, is to be quoted by, and to enliven the writings of, an antiquarian. Pistol, Nym and *id genus omne*, do not please us as characters, but are endured as fantastic creations, foils to the native wit of Falstaff.—I say wit emphatically; for this character so often extolled as the masterpiece of humour, neither contains, nor was meant to contain, any humour at all.

Whalley's Life of Jonson.

"It is to the honour of Jonson's judgment, that *the greatest poet of our nation* had the same opinion of Donne's genius and wit; and hath

preserved part of him from perishing, by putting his thoughts and satire into modern verse." *

Videlicet Pope!

" He said further to Drummond, Shakspere wanted art, and sometimes sense; for in one of his plays he brought in a number of men, saying they had suffered shipwreck in Bohemia, where is no sea near by a hundred miles."

I have often thought Shakspere justified in this seeming anachronism. In Pagan times a single name of a German kingdom might well be supposed to comprise a hundred miles more than at present. The truth is, these notes of Drummond's are more disgraceful to himself than to Jonson. It would be easy to conjecture how grossly Jonson must have been misunderstood, and what he had said in jest, as of Hippocrates, interpreted in earnest. But this is characteristic of a Scotchman: he has no notion of a jest, unless you tell him—"This is a joke!"—and still less of that finer shade of feeling, the half-and-half, in which Englishmen naturally delight.

Every Man out of His Humour.

Epilogue.

> "The throat of war be stopt within her land,
> And *turtle-footed* peace dance fairie rings
> About her court."

Turtle-footed is a pretty word, a very pretty word: pray, what does it mean? Doves, I presume, are not dancers; and the other sort of turtle, land or sea, green-fat or hawksbill, would, I should suppose, succeed better in slow minuets than in the brisk rondillo. In one sense, to be sure, pigeons and ring-doves could not dance but with *eclat—a claw!*

Poetaster.

Introduction.

"Light! I salute thee, but with wounded nerves,
Wishing thy golden splendour pitchy darkness."

There is no reason to suppose Satan's address to the sun in the "Paradise Lost," more than a mere coincidence with these lines; but were it otherwise, it would be a fine instance, what usurious interest a great genius pays in borrowing. It would not be difficult to give a detailed psychological pr from these constant outbursts of anxious self-assertion, that Jonson was not a genius, a creative power. Subtract that one thing, and you may safely accumulate on his name all other excellencies of a capacious, vigorous, agile, and richly-stored intellect.

Act i. sc. 1.

"*Ovid.* While slaves be false, fathers hard, and bawds be whorish—"

The roughness noticed by Theobald and Whalley, may be cured by a simple transposition:—

"While fathers hard, slaves false, and bawds be whorish."

Act iv. sc. 3.

"*Crisp.* O—oblatrant—furibund—fatuate—strenuous.
O—conscious."

It would form an interesting essay, or rather series of essays, in a periodical work, were all the attempts to ridicule new phrases brought together, the proportion observed of words ridiculed which have been adopted, and are now common, such as *strenuous*, *conscious*, &c., and a trial made how far any grounds can be detected, so that one might determine beforehand whether a word was invented under the conditions of assimilability to our language or not. Thus much is certain, that the ridiculers

were as often wrong as right; and Shakspere himself could not prevent the naturalization of *accommodation*, *remuneration*, &c.; or Swift the gross abuse even of the word *idea*.

Fall of Sejanus.

Act i.

> "*Arruntius.* The name Tiberius,
> I hope, will keep, howe'er he hath foregone
> The dignity and power.
> *Silius.* Sure, while he lives.
> *Arr.* And dead, it comes to Drusus. Should he fail,
> To the brave issue of Germanicus;
> And they are three: too many (ha?) for him
> To have a plot upon?
> *Sil.* I do not know
> The heart of his designs; but, sure, their face
> Looks farther than the present.
> *Arr.* By the gods,
> If I could guess he had but such a thought,
> My sword should cleave him down," &c.

The anachronic mixture in this Arruntius of the Roman republican, to whom Tiberius must have appeared as much a tyrant as Sejanus, with his James-and-Charles-the-First zeal for legitimacy of descent in this passage, is amusing. Of our great names Milton was, I think, the first who could properly be called a republican. My recollections of Buchanan's works are too faint to enable me to judge whether the historian is not a fair exception.

Act ii. Speech of Sejanus:—

> "Adultery! it is the lightest ill
> I will commit. A race of wicked acts
> Shall flow out of my anger, and o'erspread
> The world's wide face, which no posterity
> Shall e'er approve, nor yet keep silent," &c.

The more we reflect and examine, examine and reflect, the more astonished shall we be at the immense superiority of Shakspere over his contemporaries:—and yet what contemporaries!—giant minds indeed! Think of Jonson's erudition, and the force of learned authority in that age; and yet in no genuine part of Shakspere's works is there to be found such an absurd rant and ventriloquism as this, and too, too many other passages ferruminated by Jonson from Seneca's tragedies and the writings of the later Romans. I call it ventriloquism, because Sejanus is a puppet, out of which the poet makes his own voice appear to come.

Act. v. Scene of the sacrifice to Fortune. This scene is unspeakably irrational. To believe, and yet to scoff at, a present miracle is little less than impossible. Sejanus should have been made to suspect priestcraft and a secret conspiracy against him.

Volpone.

This admirable, indeed, but yet more wonderful than admirable, play is from the fertility and vigour of invention, character, language, and sentiment the strongest proof, how impossible it is to keep up any pleasurable interest in a tale, in which there is no goodness of heart in any of the prominent characters. After the third act, this play becomes not a dead, but a painful, weight on the feelings. Zeluco is an instance of the same truth. Bonario and Celia should have been made in some way or other principals in the plot; which they might have been, and the objects of interest, without having been made characters. In novels, the person, in whose fate you are most interested, is often the least marked character of the whole. If it were possible to lessen the paramountcy of Volpone

himself, a most delightful comedy might be produced, by making Celia the ward or niece of Corvino, instead of his wife, and Bonario her lover.

Epicœne.

This is to my feelings the most entertaining of old Ben's comedies, and, more than any other, would admit of being brought out anew, if under the management of a judicious and stage-understanding play-wright; and an actor, who had studied Morose, might make his fortune.

Act i. sc. 1. Clerimont's speech:—

"'He would have hanged a pewterer's 'prentice once on a Shrove Tuesday's riot, for being o' that trade, when the rest were *quiet*.'

"The old copies read *quit*, i. e. discharged from working, and gone to divert themselves." Whalley's note.

It should be *quit*, no doubt; but not meaning "discharged from working," &c.—but quit, that is, acquitted. The pewterer was at his holiday diversion as well as the other apprentices, and they as forward in the riot as he. But he alone was punished under pretext of the riot, but in fact for his trade.

Act ii. sc. 1.

"*Morose.* Cannot I, yet, find out a more compendious method, than by this *trunk*, to save my servants the labour of speech, and mine ears the discord of sounds?"

What does "trunk" mean here and in the 1st scene of the 1st act? Is it a large ear-trumpet?—or rather a tube, such as passes from parlour to kitchen, instead of a bell?

Whalley's note at the end.

"Some critics of the last age imagined the character of Morose to be wholly out of nature. But to vindicate our poet, Mr. Dryden tells us from tradition, and we may venture to take his word, that Jonson was really acquainted with a person of this whimsical turn of mind: and as

humour is a personal quality, the poet is acquitted from the charge of exhibiting a monster, or an extravagant unnatural caricatura."

If Dryden had not made all additional proof superfluous by his own plays, this very vindication would evince that he had formed a false and vulgar conception of the nature and conditions of the drama and dramatic personation. Ben Jonson would himself have rejected such a plea:—

> "For he knew, poet never credit gain'd
> By writing *truths*, but things, like truths, well feign'd."

By "truths" he means "facts." Caricatures are not less so, because they are found existing in real life. Comedy demands characters, and leaves caricatures to farce. The safest and truest defence of old Ben would be to call the Epicœne the best of farces. The defect in Morose, as in other of Jonson's *dramatis personæ*, lies in this;—that the accident is not a prominence growing out of, and nourished by, the character which still circulates in it, but that the character, such as it is, rises out of, or, rather, consists in, the accident. Shakspere's comic personages have exquisitely characteristic features; however awry, disproportionate, and laughable they may be, still, like Bardolph's nose, they are features. But Jonson's are either a man with a huge wen, having a circulation of its own, and which we might conceive amputated, and the patient thereby losing all his character; or they are mere wens themselves instead of men,—wens personified, or with eyes, nose, and mouth cut out, mandrake-fashion.

Nota bene. All the above, and much more, will have been justly said, if, and whenever, the drama of Jonson is brought into comparisons of rivalry with the Shaksperian. But this should not be. Let its inferiority to the Shaksperian be at once fairly owned,—but at the same time as the inferiority of an altogether different *genus* of the drama. On this ground, old Ben would still maintain his proud

height. He, no less than Shakspere, stands on the summit of his hill, and looks round him like a master,—though his be Lattrig and Shakspere's Skiddaw.

The Alchemist.

Act i. sc. 2. Face's speech :—

> "Will take his oath o' the Greek *Xenophon*,
> If need be, in his pocket."

Another reading is "Testament."

Probably, the meaning is,—that intending to give false evidence, he carried a Greek Xenophon to pass it off for a Greek Testament, and so avoid perjury—as the Irish do, by contriving to kiss their thumb-nails instead of the book.

Act ii. sc. 2. Mammon's speech :—

> "I will have all my beds blown up; not stuft:
> Down is too hard."

Thus the air-cushions, though perhaps only lately brought into use, were invented in idea in the seventeenth century!

Catiline's Conspiracy.

A fondness for judging one work by comparison with others, perhaps altogether of a different class, argues a vulgar taste. Yet it is chiefly on this principle that the Catiline has been rated so low. Take it and Sejanus, as compositions of a particular kind, namely, as a mode of relating great historical events in the liveliest and most interesting manner, and I cannot help wishing that we had whole volumes of such plays. We might as rationally expect the excitement of the "Vicar of Wakefield" from

Goldsmith's "History of England," as that of "Lear," "Othello," &c., from the "Sejanus" or "Catiline."

Act i. sc. 4.

"*Cat.* Sirrah, what ail you?
(*He spies one of his boys not answer.*)
Pag. Nothing.
Best. Somewhat modest.
Cat. Slave, I will strike your soul out with my foot," &c.

This is either an unintelligible, or, in every sense, a most unnatural, passage,—improbable, if not impossible, at the moment of signing and swearing such a conspiracy, to the most libidinous satyr. The very presence of the boys is an outrage to probability. I suspect that these lines down to the words "throat opens," should be removed back so as to follow the words "on this part of the house," in the speech of Catiline soon after the entry of the conspirators. A total erasure, however, would be the best, or, rather, the only possible, amendment.

Act ii. sc. 2. Sempronia's speech:—

"—He is but a new fellow,
An *inmate* here in Rome, as Catiline calls him—"

A "lodger" would have been a happier imitation of the *inquilinus* of Sallust.

Act iv. sc. 6. Speech of Cethegus:—

"Can these or such be any aids to us," &c.

What a strange notion Ben must have formed of a determined, remorseless, all-daring, foolhardiness, to have represented it in such a mouthing Tamburlane, and bombastic tongue-bully as this Cethegus of his!

Bartholomew Fair.

Induction. Scrivener's speech:—

"If there be never a *servant-monster* i' the Fair, who can help it, he says, nor a nest of antiques?"

The best excuse that can be made for Jonson, and in a somewhat less degree for Beaumont and Fletcher, in respect of these base and silly sneers at Shakspere, is, that his plays were present to men's minds chiefly as acted. They had not a neat edition of them, as we have, so as, by comparing the one with the other, to form a just notion of the mighty mind that produced the whole. At all events, and in every point of view, Jonson stands far higher in a moral light than Beaumont and Fletcher. He was a fair contemporary, and in his way, and as far as Shakspere is concerned, an original. But Beaumont and Fletcher were always imitators of, and often borrowers from, him, and yet sneer at him with a spite far more malignant than Jonson, who, besides, has made noble compensation by his praises.

Act ii. sc. 3.

"*Just.* I mean a child of the horn-thumb, a babe *of booty*, boy, a cutpurse."

Does not this confirm, what the passage itself cannot but suggest, the propriety of substituting "booty" for "beauty" in Falstaff's speech, Henry IV. Pt. I. act i. sc. 2, "Let not us, &c.?"

It is not often that old Ben condescends to imitate a modern author; but Master Dan. Knockhum Jordan and his vapours are manifest reflexes of Nym and Pistol.

Ib. sc. 5.

"*Quarl.* She'll make excellent geer for the coachmakers here in Smithfield, to anoint wheels and axletrees with."

Good! but yet it falls short of the speech of a Mr. Johnes, M.P., in the Common Council, on the invasion intended by Buonaparte: "Houses plundered—then burnt; —sons conscribed—wives and daughters ravished," &c., &c.—"But as for you, you luxurious Aldermen! with your fat will he grease the wheels of his triumphal chariot!"

Ib. sc. 6.

"*Col.* Avoid i' your satin doublet, Numps."

This reminds me of Shakspere's "Aroint thee, witch!" I find in several books of that age the words *aloigne* and *eloigne*—that is,—"keep your distance!" or "off with you!" Perhaps "aroint" was a corruption of "aloigne" by the vulgar. The common etymology from *ronger* to gnaw seems unsatisfactory.

Act iii. sc. 4.

"*Quarl.* How now, Numps! almost tired i' your protectorship? overparted, overparted?"

An odd sort of propheticality in this Numps and old Noll!

Ib. sc. 6. Knockhum's speech:—

"He eats with his eyes, as well as his teeth."

A good motto for the Parson in Hogarth's "Election Dinner,"—who shows how easily he might be reconciled to the Church of Rome, for he worships what he eats.

Act v. sc. 6.

"*Pup. Di.* It is not prophane.
Lan. It is not prophane, he say's.
Boy. It is prophane.
Pup. It is not prophane.
Boy. It is prophane.
Pup. It is not prophane.
Lan. Well said, confute him with Not, still."

An imitation of the quarrel between Bacchus and the Frogs in Aristophanes:—

Χορός.
ἀλλὰ μὴν κεκραξόμεσθά γ',
ὁπόσον ἡ φάρυγξ ἂν ἡμῶν
χανδάνῃ, εἰ' ἡμέρας,
βρεκεκεκέξ, κοάξ, κοάξ.

Διόνυσος.
τούτῳ γὰρ οὐ νικήσετε.
Χορός.
οὐδὲ μὴν ἡμᾶς σὺ πάντως.
Διόνυσος.
εὐδὲ μὴν ὑμεῖς γε δὴ μ' οὐδέποτε.

The Devil is an Ass.

Act i. sc. 1.

"*Pug.* Why any: Fraud,
Or Covetousness, or lady Vanity,
Or old Iniquity, *I'll call him hither.*"

The words in italics should probably be given to the master-devil, Satan." Whalley's note.

That is, against all probability, and with a (for Jonson) impossible violation of character. The words plainly belong to Pug, and mark at once his simpleness and his impatience.

Ib. sc. 4. Fitz-dottrel's soliloquy :—

Compare this exquisite piece of sense, satire, and sound philosophy in 1616 with Sir M. Hale's speech from the bench in a trial of a witch many years afterwards.[1]

Act ii. sc. 1. Meercraft's speech :—

"Sir, money's a whore, a bawd, a drudge.—"

I doubt not that "money" was the first word of the line, and has dropped out :—

"Money! Sir, money's a," &c.

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[1] In 1664, at Bury St. Edmonds on the trial of Rose Cullender and Amy Duny.—H. N. C.

The Staple of News.

Act iv. sc. 3. Pecunia's speech :—

"No, he would ha' done,
That lay not in his power: he had the use
Of your bodies, Band and Wax, and sometimes Statute's."

Read (1815),

"— he had the use of
Your bodies," &c.

Now, however, I doubt the legitimacy of my transposition of the "of" from the beginning of this latter line to the end of the one preceding;—for though it facilitates the metre and reading of the latter line, and is frequent in Massinger, this disjunction of the preposition from its case seems to have been disallowed by Jonson. Perhaps the better reading is—

"O' your bodies," &c.—

the two syllables being slurred into one, or rather snatched, or sucked, up into the emphasized "your." In all points of view, therefore, Ben's judgment is just; for in this way, the line cannot be read, as metre, without that strong and quick emphasis on "your" which the sense requires;—and had not the sense required an emphasis on "your," the *tmesis* of the sign of its cases "of," "to," &c., would destroy almost all boundary between the dramatic verse and prose in comedy:—a lesson not to be rash in conjectural amendments. 1818.

Ib. sc. 4.

"*P. jun.* I love all men of virtue, *frommy* Princess.—"

"Frommy," *fromme*, pious, dutiful, &c.

Act v. sc. 4. Penny-boy sen. and Porter:—

I dare not, will not, think that honest Ben had "Lear" in his mock mad scene.

The New Inn.

Act i. sc. 1. Host's speech:—

"A heavy purse, and then two turtles, *makes*.—"

"Makes," frequent in old books, and even now used in some counties for mates, or pairs.

Ib. sc. 3. Host's speech:—

"—And for a leap
O' the vaulting horse, to *play* the vaulting *house*.—"

Instead of reading with Whalley "ply" for "play," I would suggest "horse" for "house." The meaning would then be obvious and pertinent. The punlet, or pun-maggot, or pun intentional, "horse and house," is below Jonson. The *jeu-de-mots* just below—

"Read a lecture
Upon *Aquinas* at St. Thomas à *Waterings*—"

had a learned smack in it to season its insipidity.

Ib. sc. 6. Lovel's speech:—

"Then shower'd his bounties on me, like the Hours,
That open-handed sit upon the clouds,
And press the liberality of heaven
Down to the laps of thankful men!"

Like many other similar passages in Jonson, this is εἶδος χαλεπὸν ἰδεῖν—a sight which it is difficult to make one's self see,—a picture my fancy cannot copy detached from the words.

Act ii. sc. 5. Though it was hard upon old Ben, yet Felton, it must be confessed, was in the right in considering the Fly, Tipto, Bat Burst, &c., of this play mere dotages. Such a scene as this was enough to damn a new

play; and Nick Stuff is worse still,—most abominable stuff indeed!

Act iii. sc. 2. Lovel's speech:—

> "So knowledge first begets benevolence,
> Benevolence breeds friendship, friendship love."

Jonson has elsewhere proceeded thus far; but the part most difficult and delicate, yet, perhaps, not the least capable of being both morally and poetically treated, is the union itself, and what, even in this life, it can be.

SECTION VII.

NOTES ON BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER.

Seward's Preface. 1750.

"THE 'King And No King,' too, is extremely spirited in all its characters; Arbaces holds up a mirror to all men of virtuous principles but violent passions. Hence he is, as it were, at once magnanimity and pride, patience and fury, gentleness and rigour, chastity and incest, and is one of the finest mixtures of virtues and vices that any poet has drawn," &c.

' These are among the endless instances of the abject state to which psychology had sunk from the reign of Charles I. to the middle of the present reign of George III.; and even now it is but just awaking.

Ib. Seward's comparison of Julia's speech in the "Two Gentlemen of Verona," act iv. last scene—

"Madam, 'twas Ariadne passioning," &c.—

with Aspatia's speech in the "Maid's Tragedy"—

"I stand upon the sea-beach now," &c. Act ii.

and preference of the latter.

It is strange to take an incidental passage of one writer, intended only for a subordinate part, and compare it with the same thought in another writer, who had chosen it for a prominent and principal figure.

Ib. Seward's preference of Alphonso's poisoning in

"A Wife for a Month," act i. sc. 1, to the passage in "King John," act v. sc. 7,—

"Poison'd, ill fare! dead, forsook, cast off!"

Mr. Seward! Mr. Seward! you may be, and I trust you are, an angel; but you were an ass.

Ib.

"Every reader of *taste* will see how superior this is to the quotation from Shakspere."

Of what taste?

Ib. Seward's classification of the Plays:—

Surely "Monsieur Thomas," "The Chances," "Beggar's Bush," and the "Pilgrim," should have been placed in the very first class! But the whole attempt ends in a woeful failure.

Harris's Commendatory Poem on Fletcher.

"I'd have a state of wit convoked, which hath
A *power* to take up on common faith:—"

This is an instance of that modifying of quantity by emphasis, without which our elder poets cannot be scanned. "Power," here, instead of being one long syllable—pow'r—must be sounded, not indeed as a spondee, nor yet as a trochee; but as —" ⏑;—the first syllable is 1¼.

We can, indeed, never expect an authentic edition of our elder dramatic poets (for in those times a drama was a poem), until some man undertakes the work, who has studied the philosophy of metre. This has been found the main torch of sound restoration in the Greek dramatists by Bentley, Porson, and their followers;—how much more, then, in writers in our own language! It is true that quantity, an almost iron law with the Greek, is in English rather a subject for a peculiarly fine ear, than any law or

even rule; but, then, instead of it, we have, first, accent; secondly, emphasis; and lastly, retardation, and acceleration of the times of syllables according to the meaning of the words, the passion that accompanies them, and even the character of the person that uses them. With due attention to these,—above all, to that, which requires the most attention and the finest taste, the character, Massinger, for example, might be reduced to a rich and yet regular metre. But then the *regulæ* must be first known;—though I will venture to say, that he who does not find a line (not corrupted) of Massinger's flow to the time total of a trimeter catalectic iambic verse, has not read it aright. But by virtue of the last principle—the retardation or acceleration of time—we have the procelcusmatic foot ⏑ ⏑ ⏑ ⏑, and the *dispondæus* — — — —, not to mention the *choriambus*, the ionics, pæons, and epitrites.[1] Since Dryden, the metre of our poets leads to the sense: in our elder and more genuine bards, the sense, including the passion, leads to the metre. Read even Donne's satires as he meant them to be read, and as the sense and passion demand, and you will find in the lines a manly harmony.

Life of Fletcher in Stockdale's Edition. 1811.

"In general their plots are more regular than Shakspere's.—"

This is true, if true at all, only before a court of criticism, which judges one scheme by the laws of another and a diverse one. Shakspere's plots have their own laws or *regulæ*, and according to these they are regular.

[1] See note on "The Loyal Subject," and Section V.

Maid's Tragedy.

Act i. The metrical arrangement is most slovenly throughout.

"*Strat.* As well as masque can be," &c.

and all that follows to "who is return'd"—is plainly blank verse, and falls easily into it.

Ib. Speech of Melantius:—

"These soft and silken wars are not for me:
The music must be shrill, and all confused,
That stirs my blood; and then I dance with arms."

What strange self-trumpeters and tongue-bullies all the brave soldiers of Beaumont and Fletcher are! Yet I am inclined to think it was the fashion of the age from the Soldier's speech in the "Counter Scuffle;" and deeper than the fashion B. and F. did not fathom.

Ib. Speech of Lysippus:—

"Yes, but this lady
Walks discontented, with her wat'ry eyes
Bent on the earth," &c.

Opulent as Shakspere was, and of his opulence prodigal, he yet would not have put this exquisite piece of poetry in the mouth of a no-character, or as addressed to a Melantius. I wish that B. and F. had written poems instead of tragedies.

Ib.

"*Mel.* I might run fiercely, not more hastily,
Upon my foe."

Read

"I might rŭn *more* fiercely, not more hastily.—"

Ib. Speech of Calianax:—

"Office! I would I could put it off! I am sure I sweat quite through my office!"

The syllable *off* reminds the testy statesman of his robe, and he carries on the image.

Ib. Speech of Melantius:—

"—Would that blood,
That sea of blood, that I have lost in fight," &c.

All B. and F.'s generals are pugilists, or cudgel-fighters, that boast of their bottom and of the *claret* they have shed.

Ib. The Masque:—Cinthia's speech:—

"But I will give a greater state and glory,
And raise to time a *noble* memory
Of what these lovers are."

I suspect that "nobler," pronounced as "nobiler" — ◡ —, was the poet's word, and that the accent is to be placed on the penultimate of "memory." As to the passage—

"Yet, while our reign lasts, let us stretch our power," &c.

removed from the text of Cinthia's speech by these foolish editors as unworthy of B. and F.—the first eight lines are not worse, and the last couplet incomparably better, than the stanza retained.

Act ii. Amintor's speech:—

"Oh, thou hast named a word, that wipes away
All thoughts revengeful! In that sacred name,
'The king,' there lies a terror."

It is worth noticing that of the three greatest tragedians, Massinger was a democrat, Beaumont and Fletcher the most servile *jure divino* royalist, and Shakspere a philosopher;—if aught personal, an aristocrat.

A King and No King.

Act iv. Speech of Tigranes:—

> "She, that forgat the greatness of her grief
> And miseries, that must follow such mad passions,
> Endless and wild *as* women!" &c.

Seward's note and suggestion of "in."

It would be amusing to learn from some existing friend of Mr. Seward what he meant, or rather dreamed, in this note. It is certainly a difficult passage, of which there are two solutions;—one, that the writer was somewhat more injudicious than usual;—the other, that he was very, very much more profound and Shaksperian than usual. Seward's emendation, at all events, is right and obvious. Were it a passage of Shakspere, I should not hesitate to interpret it as characteristic of Tigranes' state of mind,—disliking the very virtues, and therefore half-consciously representing them as mere products of the violence, of the sex in general in all their whims, and yet forced to admire, and to feel and to express gratitude for, the exertion in his own instance. The inconsistency of the passage would be the consistency of the author. But this is above Beaumont and Fletcher.

The Scornful Lady.

Act ii. Sir Roger's speech:—

"Did I for this consume my *quarters* in meditations, vows, and woo'd her in heroical epistles? Did I expound the Owl, and undertake, with labour and expense, the recollection of those thousand pieces, consumed in cellars and tobacco-shops, of that our honour'd Englishman, Nic. Broughton?" &c.

Strange, that neither Mr. Theobald, nor Mr. Seward, should have seen that this mock heroic speech is in full-mouthed blank verse! Had they seen this, they would have seen that "quarters" is a substitution of the players for "quires" or "squares," (that is) of paper:—

> "Consume my quires in meditations, vows,
> And woo'd her in heroical epistles."

They ought, likewise, to have seen that the abbreviated "Ni. Br." of the text was properly "Mi. Dr."—and that Michael Drayton, not Nicholas Broughton, is here ridiculed for his poem "The Owl" and his "Heroical Epistles."

Ib. Speech of Younger Loveless:—

> "Fill him some wine. Thou dost not see me moved," &c.

These Editors ought to have learnt, that scarce an instance occurs in B. and F. of a long speech not in metre. This is plain staring blank verse.

The Custom of the Country.

I cannot but think that in a country conquered by a nobler race than the natives, and in which the latter became villeins and bondsmen, this custom, *lex merchetæ*, may have been introduced for wise purposes,—as of improving the breed, lessening the antipathy of different races, and producing a new bond of relationship between the lord and the tenant, who, as the eldest born, would, at least, have a chance of being, and a probability of being thought, the lord's child. In the West Indies it cannot have these effects, because the mulatto is marked by nature different from the father, and because there is no bond, no law, no custom, but of mere debauchery. 1815.

Act i. sc. 1. Rutilio's speech:—

> "Yet if you play not fair play," &c.

Evidently to be transposed and read thus:—

"Yet if you play not fair, above-board too,
I'll tell you what—
I've a foolish engine here:—I say no more—
But if your Honour's guts are not enchanted—"

Licentious as the comic metre of B. and F. is,—a far more lawless, and yet far less happy, imitation of the rhythm of animated talk in real life than Massinger's—still it is made worse than it really is by ignorance of the halves, thirds, and two-thirds of a line which B. and F. adopted from the Italian and Spanish dramatists. Thus in Rutilio's speech:—

"Though I confess
Any man would desire to have her, and by any means," &c.

Correct the whole passage—

"Though I confess
Any man would
Desire to have her, and by any means,
At any rate too, yet this common hangman
That hath whipt off a thousand maids' heads already—
That he should glean the harvest, sticks in my stomach!"

In all comic metres the gulping of short syllables, and the abbreviation of syllables ordinarily long by the rapid pronunciation of eagerness and vehemence, are not so much a license, as a law,—a faithful copy of nature, and let them be read characteristically, the times will be found nearly equal. Thus the three words marked above make a *choriambus* — ∪ ∪ —, or perhaps a *pæon primus* — ∪ ∪ ∪; a dactyl, by virtue of comic rapidity, being only equal to an iambus when distinctly pronounced. I have no doubt that all B. and F.'s works might be safely corrected by attention to this rule, and that the editor is entitled to transpositions of all kinds, and to not a few omissions. For the rule of the metre once lost—what was to restrain the actors from interpolation?

The Elder Brother.

Act i. sc. 2. Charles's speech:—

"—For what concerns tillage,
Who better can deliver it than Virgil
In his Georgicks? and to cure your herds,
His Bucolicks is a master-piece.

Fletcher was too good a scholar to fall into so gross a blunder, as Messrs. Sympson and Colman suppose. I read the passage thus:—

"For what concerns tillage,
Who better can deliver it than Virgil,
In his Georgicks, *or* to cure your herds;
(His Bucolicks are a master-piece.) But when," &c.

Jealous of Virgil's honour, he is afraid lest, by referring to the Georgics alone, he might be understood as undervaluing the preceding work. "Not that I do not admire the Bucolics, too, in their way:—But when, &c."

Act iii. sc. 3. Charles's speech:—

"—She has a face looks like a *story*;
The *story* of the heavens looks very like her."

Seward reads "glory;" and Theobald quotes from Philaster—

"That reads the story of a woman's face.—"

I can make sense of this passage as little as Mr. Seward;—the passage from Philaster is nothing to the purpose. Instead of "*a* story," I have sometimes thought of proposing "Astræa."

Ib. Angelina's speech:—

"You're old and dim, Sir,
And the shadow of the earth eclipsed your judgment."

Inappropriate to Angelina, but one of the finest lines in our language.

Act iv. sc. 3. Charles's speech:—

> "And lets the serious part of life run by
> As thin neglected sand, whiteness of name,
> You must be mine," &c.

Seward's note, and reading—

> "—Whiteness of name,
> You must be mine!"

Nonsense! "Whiteness of name," is in apposition to "the serious part of life," and means a deservedly pure reputation. The following line—"You *must* be mine!" means—"Though I do not enjoy you to-day, I shall hereafter, and without reproach."

The Spanish Curate.

Act iv. sc. 7. Amaranta's speech:—

> "And still I push'd him on, as he had been *coming*."

Perhaps the true word is "conning," that is, learning, or reading, and therefore inattentive.

Wit without Money.

Act i. Valentine's speech:—

> "One without substance," &c.

The present text, and that proposed by Seward, are equally vile. I have endeavoured to make the lines sense, though the whole is, I suspect, incurable except by bold conjectural reformation. I would read thus:—

> "One without substance of herself, that's woman;
> Without the pleasure of her life, that's wanton;
> Tho' she be young, forgetting it; tho' fair,

Making her glass the eyes of honest men,
Not her own admiration."

"That's wanton," or, "that is to say, wantonness."

Act ii. Valentine's speech:—

"Of half-a-crown a week for pins and puppets—"

As there is a syllable wanting in the measure here. Seward.

A syllable wanting! Had this Seward neither ears nor fingers? The line is a more than usually regular iambic hendecasyllable.

Ib.

"With one man satisfied, with one rein guided;
With one faith, one content, one bed;
Aged, she makes the wife, preserves the fame and issue;
A widow is," &c.

Is "apaid"—contented—too obsolete for B. and F.? If not, we might read it thus:—

"Content with one faith, with one bed apaid,
She makes the wife, preserves the fame and issue;—"

Or it may be—

"—with one breed apaid—"

that is, satisfied with one set of children, in opposition to—

"A widow is a Christmas-box," &c.

Colman's note on Seward's attempt to put this play into metre.

The editors, and their contemporaries in general, were ignorant of any but the regular iambic verse. A study of the Aristophanic and Plautine metres would have enabled them to reduce B. and F. throughout into metre, except where prose is really intended.

The Humorous Lieutenant.

Act i. sc. 1. Second Ambassador's speech:—

"—When your angers,
Like so many brother billows, rose together,
And, curling up *your* foaming crests, defied," &c.

This worse than superfluous "like" is very like an interpolation of some matter of fact critic—all *pus, prose atque venenum*. The "your" in the next line, instead of "their," is likewise yours, Mr. Critic!

Act ii. sc. 1. Timon's speech:—

"Another of a new *way* will be look'd at.—"

We must suspect the poets wrote, "of a new *day*." So, immediately after,

"——Time may
For all his wisdom, yet give us a day."
Seward's Note.

For this very reason I more than suspect the contrary.

Ib. sc. 3. Speech of Leucippe:—

"I'll put her into action for a *wastcoat*.—"

What we call a riding-habit,—some mannish dress.

The Mad Lover.

Act iv. Masque of beasts:—

"—This goodly tree,
An usher that still grew before his lady,
Wither'd at root: this, for he could not woo,
A grumbling lawyer:" &c.

Here must have been omitted a line rhyming to "tree;" and the words of the next line have been transposed:—

> "This goodly tree,
> *Which leafless, and obscur'd with moss you see,*
> An usher this, that 'fore his lady grew,
> Wither'd at root: this, for he could not woo," &c.

The Loyal Subject.

It is well worthy of notice, and yet has not been, I believe, noticed hitherto, what a marked difference there exists in the dramatic writers of the Elizabetho-Jacobean age—(Mercy on me! what a phrase for "the writers during the reigns of Elizabeth and James I.!")—in respect of their political opinions. Shakspere, in this as in all other things, himself and alone, gives the permanent politics of human nature, and the only predilection, which appears, shews itself in his contempt of mobs and the populacy. Massinger is a decided Whig;—Beaumont and Fletcher high-flying, passive-obedience, Tories. The Spanish dramatists furnished them with this, as with many other ingredients. By the by, an accurate and familiar acquaintance with all the productions of the Spanish stage previously to 1620, is an indispensable qualification for an editor of B. and F.;—and with this qualification a most interesting and instructive edition might be given. This edition of Colman's (Stockdale, 1811) is below criticism.

In metre, B. and F. are inferior to Shakspere, on the one hand, as expressing the poetic part of the drama, and to Massinger, on the other, in the art of reconciling metre with the natural rhythm of conversation,—in which, indeed, Massinger is unrivalled. Read him aright, and measure by time, not syllables, and no lines can be more legitimate, —none in which the substitution of equipollent feet, and the modifications by emphasis, are managed with such

exquisite judgment.[1] B. and F. are fond of the twelve syllable (not Alexandrine) line, as—

"Too many fears 'tis thought too: and to nourish those—"

This has, often, a good effect, and is one of the varieties most common in Shakspere.

Rule a Wife and Have a Wife.

Act iii. Old Woman's speech:—

"—I fear he will knock my
Brains out for lying."

Mr. Seward discards the words "for lying," because, "most of the things spoke of Estifania are true, with only a little exaggeration, and because they destroy all appearance of measure." Colman's note.

Mr. Seward had his brains out. The humour lies in Estifania's having ordered the Old Woman to tell these tales of her; for though an intriguer, she is not represented as other than chaste; and as to the metre, it is perfectly correct.

Ib.

"*Marg.* As you love me, give way.
Leon. It shall be better, I will give none, madam," &c.

The meaning is: "It shall be a better way, first;—as it is, I will not give it, or any that you in your present mood would wish."

The Laws of Candy.

Act i. Speech of Melitus:—

"Whose insolence and never yet match'd pride
Can by no character be well express'd,
But in her only name, the proud Erota."

Colman's note.

[1] See note on Harris's commendatory poem, and Section V.

The poet intended no allusion to the word "Erota" itself; but says that her very name, "the proud Erota," became a character and adage; as we say, a Quixote or a Brutus: so to say an "Erota," expressed female pride and insolence of beauty.

Ib. Speech of Antinous:—

> "Of my peculiar honours, not derived
> From *successary*, but purchased with my blood."

The poet doubtless wrote "successry," which, though not adopted in our language, would be, on many occasions, as here, a much more significant phrase than ancestry.

The Little French Lawyer.[1]

Act i. sc. 1. Dinant's speech:—

> "Are you become a patron too? 'Tis a new one,
> No more on't," &c.

Seward reads:—

> "Are you become a patron too? *How long*
> *Have you been conning this speech?* 'Tis a new one," &c.

If conjectural emendation, like this, be allowed, we might venture to read:—

> "Are you become a patron *to a new tune?*

or,

> "Are you become a patron? 'Tis a new *tune.*"

Ib.

> "*Din.* Thou wouldst not willingly
> Live a protested coward, or be call'd one?
> *Cler.* Words are but words.
> *Din.* Nor wouldst thou take a blow?"

Seward's note.

[1] See Appendix: V., *June* 24, 1827.

O miserable! Dinant sees through Cleremont's gravity, and the actor is to explain it. "Words are but words," is the last struggle of affected morality.

Valentinian.

Act i. sc. 3. It is a real trial of charity to read this scene with tolerable temper towards Fletcher. So very slavish—so reptile—are the feelings and sentiments represented as duties. And yet remember he was a bishop's son, and the duty to God was the supposed basis.

"Personals, including body, house, home, and religion;—property, subordination, and inter-community;—these are the fundamentals of society. I mean here, religion negatively taken,—so that the person be not compelled to do or utter, in relation of the soul to God, what would be, in that person, a lie;—such as to force a man to go to church, or to swear that he believes what he does not believe. Religion, positively taken, may be a great and useful privilege, but cannot be a right,—were it for this only that it cannot be pre-defined. The ground of this distinction between negative and positive religion, as a social right, is plain. No one of my fellow-citizens is encroached on by my not declaring to him what I believe respecting the super-sensual; but should every man be entitled to preach against the preacher, who could hear any preacher? Now it is different in respect of loyalty. There we have positive rights, but not negative rights;—for every pretended negative would be in effect a positive;—as if a soldier had a right to keep to himself, whether he would, or would not, fight. Now, no one of these fundamentals can be rightfully attacked, except when the guardian of it has abused it to subvert one or more of the rest. The reason is, that the guardian, as a fluent, is less than the permanent which he is to guard. He is the temporary and mutable mean,

and derives his whole value from the end. In short, as robbery is not high treason, so neither is every unjust act of a king the converse. All must be attacked and endangered. Why? Because the king, as *a* to A., is a mean to A. or subordination, in a far higher sense than a proprietor, as *b* to B, is a mean to B. or property.

Act ii. sc. 2. Claudia's speech:—

"Chimney-pieces!" &c.

The whole of this speech seems corrupt; and if accurately printed,—that is, if the same in all the prior editions, irremediable but by bold conjecture. "*Till* my tackle," should be, I think, *while*, &c.

Act iii. sc. 1. B. and F. always write as if virtue or goodness were a sort of talisman, or strange something, that might be lost without the least fault on the part of the owner. In short, their chaste ladies value their chastity as a material thing,—not as an act or state of being; and this mere thing being imaginary, no wonder that all their women are represented with the minds of strumpets, except a few irrational humourists, far less capable of exciting our sympathy than a Hindoo, who has had a basin of cow-broth thrown over him;—for this, though a debasing superstition, is still real, and we might pity the poor wretch, though we cannot help despising him. But B. and F.'s Lucinas are clumsy fictions. It is too plain that the authors had no one idea of chastity as a virtue, but only such a conception as a blind man might have of the power of seeing, by handling an ox's eye. In "The Queen of Corinth," indeed, they talk differently; but it is all talk, and nothing is real in it but the dread of losing a reputation. Hence the frightful contrast between their women (even those who are meant for virtuous) and Shakspere's. So, for instance, "The Maid in the Mill:"—a woman must not merely have grown old in brothels, but have chuckled

over every abomination committed in them with a rampant sympathy of imagination, to have had her fancy so drunk with the *minutiæ* of lechery as this icy chaste virgin evinces hers to have been.

It would be worth while to note how many of these plays are founded on rapes,—how many on incestuous passions, and how many on mere lunacies. Then their virtuous women are either crazy superstitions of a merely bodily negation of having been acted on, or strumpets in their imaginations and wishes, or, as in this "Maid in the Mill," both at the same time. In the men, the love is merely lust in one direction,—exclusive preference of one object. The tyrant's speeches are mostly taken from the mouths of indignant denouncers of the tyrant's character, with the substitution of "I" for "he," and the omission of the prefatory "he acts as if he thought" so and so. The only feelings they can possibly excite are disgust at the Aeciuses, if regarded as sane loyalists, or compassion, if considered as Bedlamites. So much for their tragedies. But even their comedies are, most of them, disturbed by the fantasticalness, or gross caricature, of the persons or incidents. There are few characters that you can really like,—(even though you should have had erased from your mind all the filth, which bespatters the most likeable of them, as Piniero in "The Island Princess" for instance,)—scarcely one whom you can love. How different this from Shakspere, who makes one have a sort of sneaking affection even for his Barnardines;—whose very Iagos and Richards are awful, and, by the counteracting power of profound intellects, rendered fearful rather than hateful;—and even the exceptions, as Goneril and Regan, are proofs of superlative judgment and the finest moral tact, in being left utter monsters, *nulla virtute redempta*, and in being kept out of sight as much as possible,—they being, indeed, only means for the excitement and deepening of noblest emotions to-

wards the Lear, Cordelia, &c., and employed with the severest economy! But even Shakspere's grossness—that which is really so, independently of the increase in modern times of vicious associations with things indifferent,—(for there is a state of manners conceivable so pure, that the language of Hamlet at Ophelia's feet might be a harmless rallying, or playful teazing, of a shame that would exist in Paradise)[1]—at the worst, how diverse in kind is it from Beaumont and Fletcher's! In Shakspere it is the mere generalities of sex, mere words for the most part, seldom or never distinct images,[2] all head-work, and fancy-drolleries; there is no sensation supposed in the speaker. I need not proceed to contrast this with B. and F.

Rollo.

This is, perhaps, the most energetic of Fletcher's tragedies. He evidently aimed at a new Richard III. in "Rollo;"—but as in all his other imitations of Shakspere, he was not philosopher enough to bottom his original. Thus, in "Rollo," he has produced a mere personification of outrageous wickedness, with no fundamental characteristic impulses to make either the tyrant's words or actions philosophically intelligible. Hence, the most pathetic situations border on the horrible, and what he meant for the terrible, is either hateful, τὸ μιαρὸν, or ludicrous. The scene of Baldwin's sentence in the third act is probably

[1] See Section V. and note, and opening paragraph of Section VI.

[2] Béranger himself could not be more delicate:—

"Ton père dit: Pour gendre,
Tra, la, tralala, la, la, la,
Flora, faut-il le prendre?
Oui, tout bas répondra
Ma timide Flora."

La Nourrice.

the grandest working of passion in all B. and F.'s dramas; —but the very magnificence of filial affection given to Edith, in this noble scene, renders the after scene—(in imitation of one of the least Shaksperian of all Shakspere's works, if it be his, the scene between Richard and Lady Anne),—in which Edith is yielding to a few words and tears, not only unnatural, but disgusting. In Shakspere, Lady Anne is described as a weak, vain, very woman throughout.

Act i. sc. 1.

> "*Gis.* He is indeed the perfect character
> Of a good man, and so his actions speak him."

This character of Aubrey, and the whole spirit of this and several other plays of the same authors, are interesting as traits of the morals which it was fashionable to teach in the reigns of James I. and his successor, who died a martyr to them. Stage, pulpit, law, fashion,—all conspired to enslave the realm. Massinger's plays breathe the opposite spirit: Shakspere's the spirit of wisdom which is for all ages. By the by, the Spanish dramatists—Calderon, in particular,—had some influence in this respect, of romantic loyalty to the greatest monsters, as well as in the busy intrigues of B. and F.'s plays.

The Wildgoose Chase.

Act ii. sc. 1. Belleur's speech:—

> "—that wench, methinks,
> If I were but well set on, for she is a *fable*,
> If I were but hounded right, and one to teach me."

Sympson reads "affable," which Colman rejects, and says, "the next line seems to enforce" the reading in the text.

Pity, that the editor did not explain wherein the sense, "seemingly enforced by the next line," consists. May the

true word be "a sable," that is, a black fox, hunted for its precious fur? Or "at-able,"—as we now say,—"she is come-at-able?"

A Wife for a Month.

Act iv. sc. 1. Alphonso's speech:—

> "Betwixt the cold bear and the raging lion
> Lies my safe way."

Seward's note and alteration to—

> "'Twixt the cold bears, far from the raging lion—"

This Mr. Seward is a blockhead of the provoking species. In his itch for correction, he forgot the words—"lies my safe way!" The Bear is the extreme pole, and thither he would travel over the space contained between it and "the raging lion."

The Pilgrim.

Act iv. sc. 2. Alinda's interview with her father is lively, and happily hit off; but this scene with Roderigo is truly excellent. Altogether, indeed, this play holds the first place in B. and F.'s romantic entertainments, *Lust-spiele*, which collectively are their happiest performances, and are only inferior to the romance of Shakspere in the "As You Like It," "Twelfth Night," &c.

Ib.

> "*Alin.* To-day you shall wed Sorrow,
> And Repentance will come to-morrow."

Read "Penitence," or else—

> "Repentance, she will come to-morrow."

The Queen of Corinth.

Act ii. sc. 1. Merione's speech. Had the scene of this tragi-comedy been laid in Hindostan instead of Corinth, and the gods here addressed been the Veeshnoo and Co. of the Indian Pantheon, this rant would not have been much amiss.

In respect of style and versification, this play and the following of "Bonduca" may be taken as the best, and yet as characteristic, specimens of Beaumont and Fletcher's dramas. I particularly instance the first scene of the "Bonduca." Take Shakespere's "Richard II.," and having selected some one scene of about the same number of lines, and consisting mostly of long speeches, compare it with the first scene in "Bonduca,"—not for the idle purpose of finding out which is the better, but in order to see and understand the difference. The latter, that of B. and F., you will find a well arranged bed of flowers, each having its separate root, and its position determined aforehand by the will of the gardener,—each fresh plant a fresh volition. In the former you see an Indian fig-tree, as described by Milton;—all is growth, evolution, γένεσις;—each line, each word almost, begets the following, and the will of the writer is an interfusion, a continuous agency, and not a series of separate acts. Shakspere is the height, breadth, and depth of genius: Beaumont and Fletcher the excellent mechanism, in juxta-position and succession, of talent.[1]

The Noble Gentleman.

Why have the dramatists of the times of Elizabeth, James I. and the first Charles become almost obsolete, with the exception of Shakspere? Why do they no longer belong to the English, being once so popular? And why

[1] Compare Section V.

is Shakspere an exception?—One thing, among fifty, necessary to the full solution is, that they all employed poetry and poetic diction on unpoetic subjects, both characters and situations, especially in their comedy. Now Shakspere is all, all ideal,—of no time, and therefore for all times. Read, for instance, Marine's panegyric in the first scene of this play:—

> "Know
> The eminent court, to them that can be wise,
> And fasten on her blessings, is a sun," &c.

What can be more unnatural and inappropriate—(not only is, but must be felt as such)—than such poetry in the mouth of a silly dupe? In short, the scenes are mock dialogues, in which the poet *solus* plays the ventriloquist, but cannot keep down his own way of expressing himself. Heavy complaints have been made respecting the transprosing of the old plays by Cibber: but it never occurred to these critics to ask, how it came that no one ever attempted to transprose a comedy of Shakspere's.

The Coronation.

Act i. Speech of Seleucus:—

> "Altho' he be my enemy, should any
> Of the gay flies that buz about the court,
> *Sit* to catch trouts i' the summer, tell me so,
> I durst," &c.

Colman's note.

Pshaw! "Sit" is either a misprint for "set," or the old and still provincial word for "set," as the participle passive of "seat" or "set." I have heard an old Somersetshire gardener say:—"Look, Sir! I set these plants here; those yonder I *sit* yesterday."

Act ii. Speech of Arcadius:—

"Nay, some will swear they love their mistress,
Would hazard lives and fortunes," &c

Read thus:—

"Nay, some will swear they love their mistress so,
They would hazard lives and fortunes to preserve
One of her hairs brighter than Berenice's,
Or young Apollo's; and yet, after this," &c.

"Thĕy would hăzard"—furnishes an anapæst for an *iambus*. "And yet," which must be read, *ănyĕt*, is an instance of the enclitic force in an accented monosyllable. "Ănd yĕt" is a complete *iambus;* but *anyet* is, like *spirit*, a dibrach ⏑ ⏑, trocheized, however, by the *arsis* or first accent damping, though not extinguishing, the second.

Wit at Several Weapons.

Act i. Oldcraft's speech:—

"I'm arm'd at all points," &c

It would be very easy to restore all this passage to metre, by supplying a sentence of four syllables, which the reasoning almost demands, and by correcting the grammar. Read thus:—

"Arm'd at all points 'gainst treachery, I hold
My humour firm. If, living, I can see thee
Thrive by thy wits, I shall have the more courage,
Dying, to trust thee with my lands. If not,
The best wit, I can hear of, carries them.
For since so many in my time and knowledge,
Rich children of the city, have concluded
For lack of wit in beggary, I'd rather
Make a wise stranger my executor,
Than a fool son my heir, and have my lands call'd
After my wit than name: and that's my nature!

Ib. Oldcraft's speech:—

"To prevent which I have sought out a match for her.—"

Read

"Which to prevent I've sought a match out for her."

Ib. Sir Gregory's speech :—

"—— Do you think
"I'll have any of the wits hang upon me after I am married once?"

Read it thus :—

"Do you think
That I'll have any of the wits to hang
Upon me after I am married once?"

and afterwards—

"Is it a fashion in London,
To marry a woman, and to never see her?"

The superfluous "to" gives it the Sir Andrew Ague-cheek character.

The Fair Maid of the Inn

Act ii. Speech of Albertus :—

"But, Sir,
By my life, I vow to take assurance from you,
That right-hand never more shall strike my son,
* * * * * *
Chop his hand off!"

In this (as, indeed, in all other respects; but most in this) it is that Shakspere is so incomparably superior to Fletcher and his friend,—in judgment! What can be conceived more unnatural and motiveless than this brutal resolve? How is it possible to feel the least interest in Albertus afterwards? or in Cesario after his conduct?

The Two Noble Kinsmen.

On comparing the prison scene of Palamon and Arcite, Act ii. sc. 2, with the dialogue between the same speakers, Act i. sc. 2, I can scarcely retain a doubt as to the first act's having been written by Shakspere. Assuredly it was not written by B. and F. I hold Jonson more probable than either of these two.

The main presumption, however, for Shakspere's share in this play rests on a point, to which the sturdy critics of this edition (and indeed all before them) were blind,—that is, the construction of the blank verse, which proves beyond all doubt an intentional imitation, if not the proper hand, of Shakspere. Now, whatever improbability there is in the former (which supposes Fletcher conscious of the inferiority, the too poematic *minus*-dramatic nature, of his versification, and of which there is neither proof, nor likelihood) adds so much to the probability of the latter. On the other hand, the harshness of many of these very passages, a harshness unrelieved by any lyrical inter-breathings, and still more the want of profundity in the thoughts, keep me from an absolute decision.

Act i. sc. 3. Emilia's speech :—

> "——— Since his depart, his *sports*,
> Tho' craving seriousness and skill," &c.

I conjecture "imports," that is, duties or offices of importance. The flow of the versification in this speech seems to demand the trochaic ending—o ; while the text blends jingle and *hisses* to the annoyance of less sensitive ears than Fletcher's—not to say, Shakspere's.

The Woman Hater.

Act i. sc. 2. This scene from the beginning is prose printed as blank verse, down to the line—

"E'en all the valiant stomachs in the court—"

where the verse recommences. This transition from the prose to the verse enhances, and indeed forms, the comic effect. Lazarillo concludes his soliloquy with a hymn to the goddess of plenty.

III.

LECTURES ON SHAKSPERE AND MILTON, AT BRISTOL.

1813-14.

LECTURES ON SHAKSPERE AND MILTON AT BRISTOL. 1813-14.

INTRODUCTORY.

WE have given Mr. Collier's transcripts of the Lectures of 1811-12. We have given the various notes and fragments preserved by Coleridge, in preparation for his volumes of dramatic criticism,[1] which never appeared; and such other matter on the same subject as is found in the "Remains." Our materials are not exhausted.

Incited, doubtless, by the fame of the course of 1811-12, Coleridge's Bristol friends eagerly closed with his proposal, in the autumn of 1813, to repeat it in that city. Accordingly, Coleridge forwarded a Prospectus to Bristol. This was busily circulated, tickets sold, the date of the first lecture fixed, and the lecturer duly informed. On the day appointed, or rather, a few days later, according to Cottle,[2] the active agent in the business, Coleridge arrived from London.

[1] See plan of the contents of these projected volumes in note to p. 177.

[2] "Early Recollections, chiefly relating to Samuel Taylor Coleridge, during his long residence in Bristol." By Joseph Cottle. 2 vols. 1837. Cottle was the publisher of Coleridge's early poems. Long before 1813 he had retired from business, though little older than his friend.

It appears that an opening course of five lectures on Shakspere was in the first instance announced. The first lecture of this course was delivered on Thursday, October 28th, 1813. In commencing the second lecture, Coleridge, apologizing for his diffuseness in the first, promises a sixth, without extra fee. The remaining five were regularly delivered on successive Tuesdays and Thursdays, up to November 16.

Cottle, in his account of them, falls into confusion over the date of these lectures. He puts them, as well as the Milton Lectures, in 1814. Mr. George, of Bristol, has pointed out to us this error. To Mr. George, also, the public is indebted for the full reports which follow of the earlier course, unearthed by him from forgotten pages of "The Bristol Gazette," and from the lumber-room of the Bristol Museum.[1] These reports are particularly valuable, as supplementing Mr. Collier's imperfect series.

On December 30, 1813, Coleridge announced a "second course of Lectures, on the remaining plays of Shakspere," with "an examination of Dr. Johnson's Preface to Shakspere," and four Lectures on Milton.

It is impossible to say whether these additional Shakspere Lectures were delivered or not. We have found no trace of them. Coleridge was ill and desponding at this time. At his own wish, he was constantly followed by a servant, whose duty it was to prevent him purchasing opium. One thing is certain, that in "The Mirror," of

[1] "The volume containing the Reports of the 1813 Lectures," writes Mr. George, "I hunted up in the loft of the Bristol Museum, where it had been lying on the floor for many years. The volume contains odd numbers of Bristol papers, ranging from 1803 to 1813."

Saturday, April 2, 1814, without any allusion to Shakspere, four Lectures on Milton are announced, to commence on "Tuesday next." On the 9th, the 3rd and 4th Lectures are announced. So that the Milton Lectures were actually delivered on April 5, 7, 12, and 14.

As they would, doubtless, be, in substance, the same as those of 1811-12, which, it will be remembered, Mr. Collier lost, we much regret not to have been able to discover any reports of these Milton Lectures. All we know about them is that they were not well attended.[1] They probably were not reported. The allied armies in Paris, and Napoleon abdicating at Fontainebleau, at the very time of their delivery, would leave small room in men's minds, or in newspaper columns, for literary subjects.

[1] "An erysipelatous complaint, of an alarming nature, has rendered me barely able to attend and go through with my lectures, the receipts of which have almost paid the expenses of the room, advertisements," &c.—Coleridge to Cottle, in a letter undated, but evidently referring to the Milton Lectures.

LECTURE I.

General Characteristics of Shakspere.[1]

IN lectures of which amusement forms a share, difficulties are common to the first. The architect places his foundation out of sight, the musician tunes his instrument before his appearance, but the lecturer has to try his chords in the hearing of the assembly. This will not tend to increase amusement, but it is necessary to the right understanding of the subject to be developed.

Poetry in essence is as familiar to barbarous as civilized nations. The Laplander and the savage Indian are equally cheered by it, as the inhabitants of Paris or London;—its spirit incorporates and takes up surrounding materials, as a plant clothes itself with soil and climate, whilst it bears marks of a vital principle within, independent of all accidental circumstances.

To judge with fairness of an author's works, we must observe, firstly, what is essential, and secondly, what arises

[1] With this first report compare pp. 231 *et seq.*, the portion of the "Remains," "for the most part communicated by Mr. Justice Coleridge."

How shall we account for the verbal coincidences? We can only suggest that Coleridge used, in 1813, notes he had previously made, and that these notes ultimately fell into Mr. Justice Coleridge's hands.

If such is the case, our note on p. 231 should be cancelled.

from circumstances. It is essential, as in Milton,[1] that poetry be simple, sensuous, and impassionate[2]:—simple, that it may appeal to the elements and the primary laws of our nature; sensuous, since it is only by sensuous images that we can elicit truth as at a flash; impassionate, since images must be vivid, in order to move our passions and awaken our affections.

In judging of different poets, we ought to inquire what authors have brought into fullest play our imagination and our reason, or have created the greatest excitements and produced the completest harmony. Considering only great exquisiteness of language, and sweetness of metre, it is impossible to deny to Pope the title of a delightful writer; whether he be a Poet must be determined as we define the word: doubtless if everything that pleases be poetry, Pope's satires and epistles must be poetry. Poetry, as distinguished from general modes of composition, does not rest in metre, it is not poetry if it make no appeal to our imagination, our passions, and our sympathy. One character attaches to all true Poets, they write from a principle within, independent of everything without. The work of a true Poet, in its form, its shapings and modifications, is distinguished from all other works that assume to belong to the class of poetry, as a natural from an artificial flower; or as the mimic garden of a child, from an enamelled meadow. In the former the flowers are broken from their stems and stuck in the ground; they are beautiful to the eye and fragrant to the sense, but their colours soon fade, and their odour is transient as the smile of the planter; while the meadow may be visited again

[1] At the end of the Sixth Report, "The Bristol Gazette" appends some errata. For "as in Milton," we are told to read "as Milton defines it."

[2] Read "passionate." The reporter has confused between *passionate* and *impassioned*.

and again, with renewed delight; its beauty is innate in the soil, and its bloom is of the freshness of nature.

The next ground of judging is how far a Poet is influenced by accidental circumstances. He writes not for past ages, but for that in which he lives, and that which is to follow. It is natural that he should conform to the circumstances of his day, but a true genius will stand independent of these circumstances: and it is observable of Shakspere that he leaves little to regret that he was born in such an age. The great æra in modern times was what is called the restoration of literature; the ages which preceded it were called the dark ages; it would be more wise, perhaps, to say, the ages in which we were in the dark. It is usually overlooked that the supposed dark æra was not universal, but partial and successive or alternate; that the dark age of England was not the dark age of Italy; but that one country was in its light and vigour, while another was in its gloom and bondage. The Reformation sounded through Europe like a trumpet; from the king to the peasant there was an enthusiasm for knowledge, the discovery of a MS. was the subject of an embassy. Erasmus read by moonlight, because he could not afford a torch, and begged a penny, not for the love of charity, but for the love of learning. The three great points of attention were morals, religion, and taste, but it becomes necessary to distinguish in this age mere men of learning from men of genius; all, however, were close copyists of the ancients, and this was the only way by which the taste of mankind could be improved, and the understanding informed. Whilst Dante imagined himself a copy of Virgil, and Ariosto of Homer, they were both unconscious of that greater power working within them, which carried them beyond their originals; for their originals were polytheists. All great discoveries bear the stamp of the age in which they were made; hence we perceive the effect of their

purer religion, which was visible in their lives, and in reading of their works we should not content ourselves with the narration of events long since passed, but apply their maxims and conduct to our own.

Having intimated that times and manners lend their form and pressure to the genius, it may be useful to draw a slight parallel between the ancient and modern stage, as it existed in Greece and in England. The Greeks were polytheists, their religion was local, the object of all their knowledge, science, and taste, was their Gods; their productions were, therefore (if the expression may be allowed), statuesque;—the moderns we may designate as picturesque; the end, complete harmony. The Greeks reared a structure, which, in its parts and as a whole, filled the mind with the calm and elevated impression of perfect beauty and symmetrical proportion. The moderns, blending materials, produced one striking whole. This may be illustrated by comparing the Pantheon with York Minster or Westminster Abbey. Upon the same scale we may compare Sophocles with Shakspere:—in the one there is a completeness, a satisfying, an excellence, on which the mind can rest; in the other we see a blended multitude of materials, great and little, magnificent and mean, mingled, if we may so say, with a dissatisfying, or falling short of perfection; yet so promising of our progression, that we would not exchange it for that repose of the mind which dwells on the forms of symmetry in acquiescent admiration of grace. This general characteristic of the ancient and modern poetry, might be exemplified in a parallel of their ancient and modern music: the ancient music consisted of melody by the succession of pleasing sounds: the modern embraces harmony, the result of combination, and effect of the whole.

Great as was the genius of Shakspere, his judgment was at least equal. Of this we shall be convinced, if we look

round on the age, and compare the nature of the respective dramas of Greece and England, differing from the necessary dissimilitude of circumstances by which they are modified and influenced. The Greek stage had its origin in the ceremonies of a sacrifice; such as the goat to Bacchus;—it were erroneous to call him only the jolly god of wine, among the ancients he was venerable; he was the symbol of that power which acts without our consciousness from the vital energies of nature, as Apollo was the symbol of our intellectual consciousness. Their heroes under his influence performed more than human actions; hence tales of their favourite champions soon passed into dialogue. On the Greek stage the chorus was always before the audience—no curtain dropt—change of place was impossible, the absurd idea of its improbability was not indulged. The *scene* cannot be an exact copy of nature, but only an imitation. If we can believe ourselves at Thebes in one act, we can believe ourselves at Athens in the next. There seems to be no just boundary but what the feelings prescribe. In Greece, however, great judgment was necessary, where the same persons were perpetually before the audience. If a story lasted twenty-four hours or twenty-four years, it was equally improbable—they never attempted to impose on the senses, by bringing places to men, though they could bring men to places.

Unity of time was not necessary, where no offence was taken at its lapse between the acts, or between scene and scene, for where there were no acts or scenes it was impossible rigidly to observe its laws. To overcome these difficulties the judgment and great genius of the ancients supplied music, and with the charms of their poetry filled up the vacuity. In the story of the Agamemnon of Æschylus, the taking of Troy was supposed to be announced by the lighting of beacons on the Asiatic shore: the mind being beguiled by the narrative ode of the chorus, em-

bracing the events of the siege, hours passed as minutes, and no improbability was felt at the return of Agamemnon; and yet examined rigidly he must have passed over from Troy in less than fifteen minutes. Another fact here presented itself, seldom noticed; with the Ancients three plays were performed in one day, they were called Trilogies. In Shakspere we may fancy these Trilogies connected into one representation. If "Lear" were divided into three, each part would be a play with the ancients. Or take the three plays of Agamemnon, and divide them into acts, they would form one play:

1st. Act would be the Usurpation of Ægisthus, and Murder of Agamemnon;
2nd. Revenge of Orestes, and Murder of his Mother;
3rd. The penance of Orestes:[1]

consuming a time of twenty-two years. The three plays being but three acts, the dropping of the curtain was as the conclusion of a play.

Contrast the stage of the ancients with that of the time of Shakspere, and we shall be struck with his genius; with them, it had the trappings of royal and religious ceremony; with him, it was a naked room, a blanket for a curtain; but with his vivid appeals the imagination figured it out

"A field for monarchs."

After the rupture of the Northern nations, the Latin language, blended with the modern, produced the Romaunt tongue, the language of the Minstrels: to which term, as distinguishing their Songs and Fabliaux, we owe the word and the species of *romance*. The romantic may be considered as opposed to the antique, and from this change of manners, those of Shakspere take their colouring. He is

[1] For "Penance of Orestes," read "Trial of Orestes before the Gods."—*Errata.*

not to be tried by ancient and classic rules, but by the standard of his age. That law of unity which has its foundation, not in factitious necessity of custom, but in nature herself, is instinctively observed by Shakspere.

A unity of feeling pervades the whole of his plays. In "Romeo and Juliet" all is youth and spring—it is youth with its follies, its virtues, its precipitancies; it is spring with its odours, flowers, and transiency:—the same feeling commences, goes through, and ends the play. The old men, the Capulets and Montagues, are not common old men, they have an eagerness, a hastiness, a precipitancy—the effect of spring. With Romeo his precipitate change of passion, his hasty marriage, and his rash death, are all the effects of youth. With Juliet, love has all that is tender and melancholy in the nightingale, all that is voluptuous in the rose, with whatever is sweet in the freshness of spring, but it ends with a long deep sigh, like the breeze of the evening. This unity of character pervades the whole of his dramas.

Of that species of writing termed tragic-comedy, too much has been produced, but it has been doomed to the shelf. With Shakspere his comic constantly re-acted on his tragic characters. "Lear," wandering amidst the tempest, had all his feelings of distress increased by the overflowings of the wild wit of the Fool, as vinegar poured upon wounds exacerbates their pain; thus even his comic humour tends to the development of tragic passion.

The next character belonging to Shakspere as Shakspere, was the keeping at all times the high road of life. With him there were no innocent adulteries, he never rendered that amiable which religion and reason taught us to detest; he never clothed vice in the garb of virtue, like Beaumont and Fletcher,—the Kotzebues of his day; his fathers were roused by ingratitude, his husbands were stung by unfaithfulness; the affections were wounded in those points

where all may and all must feel. Another evidence of exquisite judgment in Shakspere was, that he seized hold of popular tales. "Lear" and the "Merchant of Venice" were popular tales, but so excellently managed, both were the representation of men in all ages and at all times.

His dramas do not arise absolutely out of some one extraordinary circumstance; the scenes may stand independently of any such one connecting incident, as faithful reflections of men and manners. In his mode of drawing characters there were no pompous descriptions of a man by himself; his character was to be drawn as in real life, from the whole course of the play, or out of the mouths of his enemies or friends. This might be exemplified in the character of Polonius, which actors have often misrepresented. Shakspere never intended to represent him as a buffoon. It was natural that Hamlet, a young man of genius and fire, detesting formality, and disliking Polonius for political reasons, as imagining that he had assisted his uncle in his usurpation, should express himself satirically; but Hamlet's words should not be taken as Shakspere's conception of him. In Polonius a certain induration of character arose from long habits of business; but take his advice to Laertes, the reverence of his memory by Ophelia, and we shall find that he was a statesman of business, though somewhat past his faculties. One particular feature which belonged to his character was, that his recollections of past life were of wisdom, and showed a knowledge of human nature, whilst what immediately passed before, and escaped from him, was emblematical of weakness.

Another excellence in Shakspere, and in which no other writer equalled him, was in the language of nature. So correct was it that we could see ourselves in all he wrote; his style and manner had also that felicity, that not a sentence could be read without its being discovered if it were Shaksperian. In observations of living character,

such as of landlords and postilions, Fielding had great excellence, but in drawing from his own heart, and depicting that species of character which no observation could teach, he failed in comparison with Richardson, who perpetually placed himself as it were in a day-dream; but Shakspere excelled in both; witness an accuracy of character in the Nurse of Juliet. On the other hand, the great characters of Othello, Iago, Hamlet, and Richard III., as he never could have witnessed anything similar, he appears invariably to have asked himself, How should I act or speak in such circumstances? His comic characters were also peculiar. A drunken constable was not uncommon; but he could make folly a vehicle for wit, as in Dogberry. Every thing was a sub-stratum on which his creative genius might erect a superstructure.

To distinguish what is legitimate in Shakspere from what does not belong to him, we must observe his varied images symbolical of moral truth, thrusting by and seeming to trip up each other, from an impetuosity of thought producing a metre which is always flowing from one verse into the other, and seldom closing with the tenth syllable of the line—an instance of which may be found in the play of "Pericles," written a century before, but which Shakspere altered, and where his alteration may be recognized even to half a line. This was the case not merely in his later plays, but in his early dramas, such as "Love's Labour's Lost." The same perfection in the flowing continuity of interchangeable metrical pauses is constantly perceptible.

Lastly, contrast his morality with the writers of his own or the succeeding age, or with those of the present day, who boast of their superiority. He never, as before observed, deserted the high road of life; he never made his lovers openly gross or profane; for common candour must allow that his images were incomparably less so than those

of his contemporaries. Even the letters of females in high life were coarser than his writings.

The writings of Beaumont and Fletcher bear no comparison; the grossest passages of Shakspere were purity to theirs; and it should be remembered that though he might occasionally disgust a sense of delicacy, he never injured the mind; he caused no excitement of passion which he flattered to degrade, never used what was faulty for a faulty purpose; carried on no warfare against virtue, by which wickedness may be made to appear as not wickedness, and where our sympathy was to be entrapped by the misfortunes of vice: with him vice never walked as it were in twilight. He never inverted the order of nature and propriety, like some modern writers, who suppose every magistrate to be a glutton or a drunkard, and every poor man humane and temperate; with him we had no benevolent braziers or sentimental ratcatchers. Nothing was purposely out of place.

If a man speak injuriously of a friend, our vindication of him is naturally warm. Shakspere had been accused of profaneness. He (Mr. C.) from the perusal of him, had acquired a habit of looking into his own heart, and perceived the goings on of his nature, and confident he was, Shakspere was a writer of all others the most calculated to make his readers better as well as wiser.

LECTURE II.

Macbeth.

MR. COLERIDGE'S lecture of last evening on "Macbeth" was marked, characteristically, with that philosophical tact which perceives causes, and traces effects, impalpable to the common apprehension. He seemed to have been admitted into the closet of Shakspere's mind; to have shared his secret thoughts, and been familiarized with his most hidden motives. Mr. Coleridge began by commenting on the vulgar stage error which transformed the Weird Sisters into witches with broomsticks. They were awful beings, and blended in themselves the Fates and Furies of the ancients with the sorceresses of Gothic and popular superstition. They were mysterious natures: fathers, mothers,[1] sexless: they come and disappear: they lead evil minds from evil to evil; and have the power of tempting those who have been the tempters of themselves. The exquisite judgment of Shakspere is shown in nothing more than in the different language of the Witches with each other, and with those whom they address: the former displays a certain fierce familiarity, grotesqueness mingled with terror; the latter is always solemn, dark, and mysterious. Mr. Coleridge proceeded to show how Macbeth became early a tempter to himself; and contrasted the talkative curiosity of the innocent-minded and open-dis-

[1] For "fathers, mothers," read "fatherless, motherless."—*Errata.*

positioned Banquo, in the scene with the Witches, with the silent, absent, and brooding melancholy of his partner. A striking instance of this self-temptation was pointed out in the disturbance of Macbeth at the election of the Prince of Cumberland; but the alarm of his conscience appears, even while meditating to remove this bar to his own advancement, as he exclaims, "Stars! hide your fires!" The ingenuity with which a man evades the promptings of conscience before the commission of a crime, was compared with his total imbecility and helplessness when the crime had been committed, and when conscience can be no longer dallied with or eluded. Macbeth in the first instance enumerates the different worldly impediments to his scheme of murder: could he put them by, he would "jump the life to come." Yet no sooner is the murder perpetrated, than all the concerns of this mortal life are absorbed and swallowed up in the avenging feeling within him: he hears a voice cry, "Macbeth has murder'd sleep:" and therefore, "Glamis shall sleep no more."

The lecturer alluded to the prejudiced idea of Lady Macbeth as a monster; as a being out of nature and without conscience: on the contrary, her constant effort throughout the play was, if the expression may be forgiven, to bully conscience. She was a woman of a visionary and day-dreaming turn of mind; her eye fixed on the shadows of her solitary ambition; and her feelings abstracted, through the deep musings of her absorbing passion, from the common-life sympathies of flesh and blood. But her conscience, so far from being seared, was continually smarting within her; and she endeavours to stifle its voice, and keep down its struggles, by inflated and soaring fancies, and appeals to spiritual agency.

So far is the woman from being dead within her, that her sex occasionally betrays itself in the very moment of dark and bloody imagination. A passage where she alludes

to "plucking her nipple from the boneless gums of her infant," though usually thought to prove a merciless and unwomanly nature, proves the direct opposite: she brings it as the most solemn enforcement to Macbeth of the solemnity of his promise to undertake the plot against Duncan. Had *she* so sworn, she would have done that which was most horrible to her feelings, rather than break the oath; and as the most horrible act which it was possible for imagination to conceive, as that which was most revolting to her own feelings, she alludes to the destruction of her infant, while in the act of sucking at her breast. Had she regarded this with savage indifference, there would have been no force in the appeal; but her very allusion to it, and her purpose in this allusion, shows that she considered no tie so tender as that which connected her with her babe. Another exquisite trait was the faltering of her resolution, while standing over Duncan in his slumbers: "Had he not resembled my father as he slept, I had done it."

Mr. Coleridge concluded the lecture, of which we have been only able to touch upon a few of the heads, by announcing his intention of undertaking in his next discourse the analysis of the character of Hamlet. It is much to the credit of the literary feeling of Bristol that the room overflowed.[1]

[1] This remark is conclusive that Coleridge's complaint in his letter to Cottle (see note to the Introductory Matter) refers to the Milton lectures.

LECTURE III.

Hamlet.

THE seeming inconsistencies in the conduct and character of Hamlet have long exercised the conjectural ingenuity of critics; and as we are always loth to suppose that the cause of defective apprehension is in ourselves, the mystery has been too commonly explained by the very easy process of supposing that it is, in fact, inexplicable, and by resolving the difficulty into the capricious and irregular genius of Shakspere.

Mr. Coleridge, in his third lecture, has effectually exposed the shallow and stupid arrogance of this vulgar and indolent decision. He has shown that the intricacies of Hamlet's character may be traced to Shakspere's deep and accurate science in mental philosophy. That this character must have some common connection with the laws of our nature, was assumed by the lecturer, from the fact that Hamlet was the darling of every country where literature was fostered. He thought it essential to the understanding of Hamlet's character that we should reflect on the constitution of our own minds. Man was distinguished from the animal in proportion as thought prevailed over sense; but in healthy processes of the mind, a balance was maintained between the impressions of outward objects and the inward operations of the intellect: if there be an overbalance in the contemplative faculty, man becomes the creature of

meditation, and loses the power of action. Shakspere seems to have conceived a mind in the highest degree of excitement, with this overpowering activity of intellect, and to have placed him in circumstances where he was obliged to act on the spur of the moment. Hamlet, though brave and careless of death, had contracted a morbid sensibility from this overbalance in the mind, producing the lingering and vacillating delays of procrastination, and wasting in the energy of resolving the energy of acting. Thus the play of "Hamlet" offers a direct contrast to that of "Macbeth:" the one proceeds with the utmost slowness, the other with breathless and crowded rapidity.

The effect of this overbalance of imagination is beautifully illustrated in the inward brooding of Hamlet—the effect of a superfluous activity of thought. His mind, unseated from its healthy balance, is for ever occupied with the world within him, and abstracted from external things; his words give a substance to shadows, and he is dissatisfied with common-place realities. It is the nature of thought to be indefinite, while definiteness belongs to reality. The sense of sublimity arises, not from the sight of an outward object, but from the reflection upon it; not from the impression, but from the idea. Few have seen a celebrated waterfall without feeling something of disappointment: it is only subsequently, by reflection, that the idea of the waterfall comes full into the mind, and brings with it a train of sublime associations. Hamlet felt this: in him we see a mind that keeps itself in a state of abstraction, and beholds external objects as hieroglyphics. His soliloquy, "Oh that this too, too solid flesh would melt," arises from a craving after the indefinite: a disposition or temper which most easily besets men of genius; a morbid craving for that which is not. The self-delusion common to this temper of mind was finely exemplified in the character which Hamlet gives of himself: "It cannot be, but I am

pigeon-liver'd, and lack gall, to make oppression bitter." He mistakes the seeing his chains for the breaking of them; and delays action, till action is of no use; and he becomes the victim of circumstances and accident.

The lecturer, in descending to particulars, took occasion to defend from the common charge of improbable eccentricity, the scene which follows Hamlet's interview with the Ghost. He showed that after the mind has been stretched beyond its usual pitch and tone, it must either sink into exhaustion and inanity, or seek relief by change. Persons conversant with deeds of cruelty contrive to escape from their conscience by connecting something of the ludicrous with them; and by inventing grotesque terms, and a certain technical phraseology, to disguise the horror of their practices.

The terrible, however paradoxical it may appear, will be found to touch on the verge of the ludicrous. Both arise from the perception of something out of the common nature of things,—something out of place: if from this we can abstract danger, the uncommonness alone remains, and the sense of the ridiculous is excited. The close alliance of these opposites appears from the circumstance that laughter is equally the expression of extreme anguish and horror as of joy; in the same manner that there are tears of joy as well as tears of sorrow, so there is a laugh of terror as well as a laugh of merriment. These complex causes will naturally have produced in Hamlet the disposition to escape from his own feelings of the overwhelming and supernatural by a wild transition to the ludicrous,—a sort of cunning bravado, bordering on the flights of delirium.

Mr. Coleridge instanced, as a proof of Shakspere's minute knowledge of human nature, the unimportant conversation which takes place during the expectation of the Ghost's appearance: and he recalled to our notice what all must have observed in common life, that on the brink of some serious

enterprise, or event of moment, men naturally elude the pressure of their own thoughts by turning aside to trivial objects and familiar circumstances. So in "Hamlet," the dialogue on the platform begins with remarks on the coldness of the air, and inquiries, obliquely connected indeed with the expected hour of the visitation, but thrown out in a seeming vacuity of topics, as to the striking of the clock. The same desire to escape from the inward thoughts is admirably carried on in Hamlet's moralizing on the Danish custom of wassailing; and a double purpose is here answered, which demonstrates the exquisite judgment of Shakspere. By thus entangling the attention of the audience in the nice distinctions and parenthetical sentences of Hamlet, he takes them completely by surprise on the appearance of the Ghost, which comes upon them in all the suddenness of its visionary character. No modern writer would have dared, like Shakspere, to have preceded this last visitation by two distinct appearances, or could have contrived that the third should rise upon the two former in impressiveness and solemnity of interest.

Mr. Coleridge at the commencement of this lecture drew a comparison between the characters of Macbeth and Bonaparte—both tyrants, both indifferent to means, however barbarous, to attain their ends; and he hoped the fate of the latter would be like the former, in failing amidst a host of foes,[1] which his cruelty and injustice had roused against him. At the conclusion of his lecture, he alluded to the successes of the Allies, and complimented his country on the lead she had taken, and the example she had set to other nations, in resisting an attack upon the middle classes of society; for if the French Emperor had succeeded in his attempts to gain universal dominion, there would have

[1] This lecture was delivered on Nov. 4; the battle of Leipsic was fought on Oct. 18.

been but two classes suffered to exist—the high and the low. England, justly proud, as she had a right to be, of a Shakspere, a Milton, a Bacon, and a Newton, could also boast of a Nelson and a Wellington.

LECTURE IV.

Winter's Tale. Othello.

AT the commencement of the fourth lecture last evening, Mr. Coleridge combated the opinion held by some critics, that the writings of Shakspere were like a wilderness, in which were desolate places, most beautiful flowers, and weeds; he argued that even the titles of his plays were appropriate and showed judgment, presenting as it were a bill of fare before the feast. This was peculiarly so in the "Winter's Tale,"—a wild story, calculated to interest a circle round a fireside. He maintained that Shakspere ought not to be judged of in detail, but on the whole. A pedant differed from a master in cramping himself with certain established rules, whereas the master regarded rules as always controllable by and subservient to the end. The passion to be delineated in the "Winter's Tale" was jealousy. Shakspere's description of this, however, was perfectly philosophical: the mind, in its first harbouring of it, became mean and despicable, and the first sensation was perfect shame, arising from the consideration of having possessed an object unworthily, of degrading a person to a thing. The mind that once indulges this passion has a predisposition, a vicious weakness, by which it kindles a fire from every spark, and from circumstances the most innocent and indifferent finds fuel to feed the flame. This he exemplified in an able manner, from the conduct and

opinion of Leontes, who seized upon occurrences of which he himself was the cause; and when speaking of Hermione, combined his anger with images of the lowest sensuality, and pursued the object with the utmost cruelty. This character Mr. Coleridge contrasted with that of Othello, whom Shakspere had portrayed the very opposite to a jealous man: he was noble, generous, open-hearted; unsuspicious and unsuspecting; and who, even after the exhibition of the handkerchief as evidence of his wife's guilt, bursts out in her praise. Mr. C. ridiculed the idea of making Othello a negro. He was a gallant Moor, of royal blood, combining a high sense of Spanish and Italian feeling, and whose noble nature was wrought on, not by a fellow with a countenance predestined for the gallows, as some actors represented Iago, but by an accomplished and artful villain, who was indefatigable in his exertions to poison the mind of the brave and swarthy Moor. It is impossible, with our limits, to follow Mr. Coleridge through those nice discriminations by which he elucidated the various characters in this excellent drama. Speaking of the character of the women of Shakspere, or rather, as Pope stated, the absence of character, Mr. Coleridge said this was the highest compliment that could be paid to them: the elements were so commixed, so even was the balance of feeling, that no one protruded in particular,—everything amiable as sisters, mothers, and wives, was included in the thought. To form a just estimation and to enjoy the beauties of Shakspere, Mr. Coleridge's lectures should be heard again and again. Perhaps, at some future period, we may occasionally fill our columns with an Analysis of his different Lectures, similar to what we presented last week of the first; at present we must content ourselves with generals.

LECTURE V.

Historical Plays. Richard II.

FULLY to comprehend the nature of the Historic Drama, the difference should be understood between the epic and tragic muse. The latter recognizes and is grounded upon the free-will of man; the former is under the control of destiny, or, among Christians, an overruling Providence. In the epic, the prominent character is ever under this influence, and when accidents are introduced, they are the result of causes over which our will has no power. An epic play begins and ends arbitrarily; its only law is, that it possesses beginning, middle, and end. Homer ends with the death of Hector: the final fate of Troy is left untouched. Virgil ends with the marriage of Æneas; the historical events are left imperfect.

In the tragic, the free-will of man is the first cause, and accidents are never introduced; if they are, it is considered a great fault. To cause the death of a hero by accident, such as slipping off a plank into the sea,[1] would be beneath the tragic muse, as it would arise from no mental action.

Shakspere, in blending the epic with the tragic, has given the impression of the drama to the history of his

[1] Coleridge had probably in mind a celebrated Duke of Milan who perished in this way, landing from his ship, and rendered helpless by the weight of his armour.

country. By this means he has bequeathed as a legacy the pure spirit of history. Not that his facts are implicitly to be relied on, or is he to be read, as the Duke of Marlborough read him, as an historian; but as distance is destroyed by a telescope, and by the force of imagination we see in the constellations, brought close to the eye, a multitude of worlds, so by the law of impressiveness, when we read his plays, we seem to live in the era he portrays.

One great object of his historic plays, and particularly of that to be examined (Richard II.), was to make his countrymen more patriotic; to make Englishmen proud of being Englishmen. It was a play not much acted. This was not regretted by the lecturer; for he never saw any of Shakspere's plays performed, but with a degree of pain, disgust, and indignation. He had seen Mrs. Siddons as Lady, and Kemble as Macbeth:—these might be the Macbeths of the Kembles, but they were not the Macbeths of Shakspere. He was therefore not grieved at the enormous size and monopoly of the theatres, which naturally produced many bad but few good actors; and which drove Shakspere from the stage, to find his proper place in the heart and in the closet, where he sits enthroned on a double-headed Parnassus. With him and Milton everything that was admirable, everything that was praiseworthy, was to be found.

Shakspere showed great judgment in his first scenes; they contained the germ of the ruling passion which was to be developed hereafter. Thus Richard's hardiness of mind, arising from kingly power; his weakness and debauchery from continual and unbounded flattery; and the haughty temper of the barons; one and the other alternately forming the moral of the play, are glanced at in the first scenes. An historic play requires more excitement than a tragic; thus Shakspere never loses an opportunity of awakening a patriotic feeling. For this purpose Old Gaunt

accuses Richard of having farmed out the island. What could be a greater rebuke to a king than to be told that

> "This realm, this England,
> Is now leased out . . . . .
> Like to a tenement, or pelting farm."

This speech of Gaunt is most beautiful; the propriety of putting so long a speech into the mouth of an old dying man might easily be shown. It thence partook of the nature of prophecy:—

> "Methinks I am a prophet new inspired,
> And thus expiring, do foretell of him."

The plays of Shakspere, as before observed of "Romeo and Juliet," were characteristic throughout:—whereas that was all youth and spring, this was womanish weakness; the characters were of extreme old age, or partook of the nature of age and imbecility. The length of the speeches was adapted to a delivery between acting and recitation, which produced in the auditors a docility or frame of mind favourable to the poet, and useful to themselves:—how different from modern plays, where the glare of the scenes, with every wished-for object industriously realized, the mind becomes bewildered in surrounding attraction; whereas Shakspere, in place of ranting, music, and outward action, addresses us in words that enchain the mind, and carry on the attention from scene to scene.

Critics who argue against the use of a thing from its abuse, have taken offence at the introduction in a tragedy of that play on words which is called punning. But how stands the fact with nature? Is there not a tendency in the human mind, when suffering under some great affliction, to associate everything around it with the obtrusive feeling, to connect and absorb all into the predominant sensation? Thus Old Gaunt, discontented with his relation,

in the peevishness of age. when Richard asks "how is it with aged Gaunt," breaks forth—

> "O! how that name befits my composition!
> Old Gaunt, indeed; and Gaunt in being old.
>
> * * * * *
>
> Gaunt am I for the grave, Gaunt as a grave," &c.

Shakspere, as if he anticipated the hollow sneers of critics, makes Richard reply:—

> "Can sick men play so nicely with their names?"

To which the answer of Gaunt presents a confutation of this idle criticism,—

> "No, misery makes sport to mock itself."

The only nomenclature of criticism should be the classification of the faculties of the mind, how they are placed, how they are subordinate, whether they do or do not appeal to the worthy feelings of our nature. False criticism is created by ignorance; light removes it; as the croaking of frogs in a ditch is silenced by a candle.

The beautiful keeping of the character of the play is conspicuous in the Duke of York. He, like Gaunt, is old, and, full of a religious loyalty, struggling with indignation at the king's vices and follies, is an evidence of a man giving up all energy under a feeling of despair. The play throughout is a history of the human mind, when reduced to ease its anguish with words instead of action, and the necessary feeling of weakness which such a state produces. The scene between the Queen, Bushy, and Bagot, is also worthy of notice, from the characters all talking high, but performing nothing; and from Shakspere's tenderness to those presentiments, which, wise as we will be, will still adhere to our nature.

Shakspere has contrived to bring the character of Richard, with all his prodigality and hard usage of his friends, still

within the compass of our pity; for we find him much beloved by those who knew him best. The Queen is passionately attached to him, and his good Bishop (Carlisle) adheres to the last. He is not one of those whose punishment gives delight; his failings appear to arise from outward objects, and from the poison of flatterers around him: we cannot, therefore, help pitying, and wishing he had been placed in a rank where he would have been less exposed, and where he might have been happy and useful.

The next character which presented itself, was that of Bolingbroke. It was itself a contradiction to the line of Pope—"Shakspere grew immortal in spite of himself." One thing was to be observed, that in all his plays he takes the opportunity of sowing germs, the full development of which appears at a future time. Thus in Henry IV. he prepares us for the character of Henry V., and the whole of Gloucester's character in Henry VI. is so different from any other that we are prepared for Richard III. In Bolingbroke is defined the struggle of inward determination with outward show of humility. His first introduction, where he says to the nobles who came to meet him,—

> "Welcome, my lords, I wot your love pursues
> A banished traitor; all my treasury
> Is yet but unfelt thanks," &c.

could only be compared to Marius, as described by Plutarch, exclaiming, on the presentation of the consular robes, Do these "befit a banished traitor?" concealing in pretended disgrace the implacable ambition that haunted him.

In this scene old York again appears, and with high feelings of loyalty and duty reproves Bolingbroke in boldness of words, but with feebleness of action:—

> "Show me thy humble heart, and not thy knee."
>
> * * * * * *
>
> "Tut! tut!

Grace me no grace, nor uncle me no uncle:
I am no traitor's uncle."

* * * * * *

"Why, foolish boy, the king is left behind,
And in my loyal bosom lies his power."

Yet after all this vehemence he concludes—

"Well, well, I see the issue of these arms;
I cannot mend it;
But if I could, by Him that gave me life,
I would attach you all. . . . .
So fare you well,
Unless you please to enter in the castle,
And there repose you for this night:—"

the whole character transpiring in verbal expression.

The overflowing of Richard's feelings, and which tends to keep him in our esteem, is the scene where he lands,—

"Dear earth, I do salute thee with my hand,
Tho' rebels wound thee with their horses' hoofs;"

so beautifully descriptive of the sensations of a man and a king attached to his country as his inheritance and his birthright. His resolution and determination of action are depicted in glowing words, thus:—

"So when this thief, this traitor Bolingbroke,
Shall see us rising in our throne," &c. &c.

* * * * * *

"For every man that Bolingbroke hath press'd,
God for his Richard hath in heavenly pay
A glorious angel."

Who, after this, would not have supposed great energy of action? No! all was spent, and upon the first ill-tidings, nothing but despondency takes place, with alternatives of unmanly despair and unfounded hopes; great activity of mind, without any strength of moral feeling to rouse to action, presenting an awful lesson in the education of princes.

Here it might be observed, that Shakspere, following the best tragedies where moral reflections are introduced in the choruses, &c., puts general reflections in the mouths of unimportant personages. His great men never moralize, except under the influence of violent passion; for it is the nature of passion to generalize. Thus, two fellows in the street, when they quarrel, have recourse to their proverbs, —"It is always the case with such fellows as those," or some such phrase, making a species their object of aversion. Shakspere uniformly elicits grand and noble truths from passion, as sparks are forced from heated iron. Richard's parade of resignation is consistent with the other parts of the play:—

> . . . . "Of comfort no man speak;
> Let 's talk of graves, of worms, and epitaphs," &c

easing his heart, and consuming all that is manly in words: never anywhere seeking comfort in despair, but mistaking the moment of exhaustion for quiet. This is finely contrasted in Bolingbroke's struggle of haughty feeling with temporary dissimulation, in which the latter says:—

> "Harry Bolingbroke,
> On both his knees doth kiss King Richard's hand," &c.

But, with the prudence of his character, after this hypocritical speech, adds—

> "March on, and mark King Richard how he looks."

Shakspere's wonderful judgment appears in his historical plays, in the introduction of some incident or other, though no way connected, yet serving to give an air of historic fact. Thus the scene of the Queen and the Gardener realizes the thing, makes the occurrence no longer a segment, but gives an individuality, a liveliness and presence to the scene.

After an observation or two upon Shakspere's taking

advantage of making an impression friendly to the character of his favourite hero Henry V., in the discourse of Bolingbroke respecting his son's absence, Mr. Coleridge said he should reserve his definition of the character of Falstaff until he came to that of Richard III., for in both was an overprizing of the intellectual above the moral character; in the most desperate and the most dissolute the same moral elements were to be found.

Of the assertion of Dr. Johnson, that the writings of Shakspere were deficient in pathos, and that he only put our senses into complete peacefulness, Mr. Coleridge held this much preferable to that degree of excitement which was the object of the German drama; and concluded a very interesting lecture with reading some observations he penned after being present at the representation of a play in Germany, in which the wife of a colonel who had fallen into disgrace was frantic first for grief, and afterwards for joy. A distortion of feeling was the feature of the modern drama of Kotzebue and his followers; its heroes were generous, liberal, brave, and noble, just so far as they could, without the sacrifice of one Christian virtue; its misanthropes were tender-hearted, and its tender-hearted were misanthropes.

LECTURE VI.

Richard III. Falstaff. Iago. Shakspere as a Poet generally.

IN our fourth page may be seen an analysis of the fifth Lecture of this gentleman. Last evening he delivered his sixth. It may be necessary here to remark that Mr. Coleridge in his second Lecture stated that from the diffuseness he unavoidably fell into in his introductory discourse, he should be unable to complete the series he had designed without an additional Lecture, which those who had regularly attended would be admitted to gratis. This was the one delivered last night; that, therefore, intended on Education, would be the seventh instead of the sixth, which is to take place on to-morrow (Thursday[1]). We must content ourselves with giving to-day a very brief account of the Lecture of last night. Mr. Coleridge commenced by tracing the history of Tragedy and Comedy among the ancients, with whom both[2] were distinct. Shakspere, though he had produced comedy in tragedy, had never produced tragi-comedy. With him, as with Aristophanes, opposites served to illustrate each other. The

[1] Nov. 18, 1813. We have no information to furnish on the subject of this Lecture.

[2] Though we have certainly tampered with the punctuation, no attempt has been made to correct the English of these reports.

arena common to both was ideal, the comedy of the Greek and the English dramatist was as much above real life as the tragedy. Tragedy was poetry in the deepest earnest, comedy was mirth in the highest zest, exulting in the removal of all bounds; an intellectual wealth squandered in sport; it had nothing to do with morality; its lessons were prudential; it taught to avoid vice; but if it aimed at admonition, it became a middle thing, neither tragedy nor comedy. Mr. C., in deciphering the character of Falstaff, was naturally led to a comparison of the wit of Shakspere with that of his contemporaries (Ben Jonson, &c. &c.), and aptly remarked, that whilst Shakspere gave us wit as salt to our meat, Ben Jonson gave wit as salt instead of meat. After wit, Mr. C. proceeded to define humour, and entered into a curious history of the origin of the term, distinguishing the sanguine, the temperate, the melancholy, the phlegmatic. Where one fluid predominated over the other, a man was said to be under the influence of that particular humour. Thus a disproportion of black bile rendered a man melancholy. But when nothing serious was the consequence of a predominance of one particular fluid, the actions performed were humorous, and a man capable of describing them termed a humorist.

Shakspere, possessed of wit, humour, fancy, and imagination, built up an outward world from the stores within his mind, as the bee builds a hive from a thousand sweets, gathered from a thousand flowers. He was not only a great Poet but a great Philosopher. The characters of Richard III., Iago, and Falstaff, were the characters of men who reverse the order of things, who place intellect at the head,[1] whereas it ought to follow like geometry, to prove and to confirm. No man, either hero or saint, ever acted from an unmixed motive; for let him do what he

[1] See the opening paragraph of Mr. Collier's XIIth Lecture, p. 147.

will rightly, still conscience whispers "it is your duty." Richard, laughing at conscience, and sneering at religion, felt a confidence in his intellect, which urged him to commit the most horrid crimes, because he felt himself, although inferior in form and shape, superior to those around him: he felt he possessed a power that they had not. Iago, on the same principle, conscious of superior intellect, gave scope to his envy, and hesitated not to ruin a gallant, open, and generous friend in the moment of felicity, because he was not promoted as he expected. Othello was superior in place, but Iago felt him inferior in intellect, and unrestrained by conscience, trampled upon him. Falstaff, not a degraded man of genius, like Burns, but a man of degraded genius, with the same consciousness of superiority to his companions, fastened himself on a young prince, to prove how much his influence on an heir apparent could exceed that of statesmen. With this view he hesitated not to practise the most contemptuous of all characters:—an open and professed liar: even his sensuality was subservient to his intellect, for he appeared to drink sack that he might have occasion to show his wit. One thing, however, worthy of observation, was the contrast of labour in Falstaff to produce wit, with the ease with which Prince Henry parried his shaft, and the final contempt which such a character deserved and received from the young king, when Falstaff, calling his friends around him, Nym, Bardolph, Pistol, &c., expected the consummation of that influence which he flattered himself to have established.

Mr. C. concluded by delivering his opinion of Shakspere's general character as a Poet, independent of a Dramatist. His "Venus and Adonis," written at an early age, contained evidence of his qualifications as a Poet: great sweetness and melody of sound, with an exquisite richness of language, were symptoms of that genius which,

rther displayed in his "Lucrece," received its consum-
ation in his Dramatic writings. Our limits prevent us
rom following Mr. Coleridge further. We do not offer
n apology to our readers for having consumed so many
of our columns in a brief outline of his interesting Lectures.
To gain an insight into human nature, to enjoy the writings
and genius of the first dramatic poet of any age, and above
all to obtain that knowledge of ourselves, which the Lec-
tures of Mr. Coleridge, rich in imagery, language, and
wisdom, were calculated to produce, have afforded us so
much genuine gratification, that we could not resist the
desire of imparting a share to our readers.

IV.

APPENDIX.

APPENDIX.

TO make our volume as complete a record as possible of Coleridge's opinions on the English Dramatists, some incidental criticisms from other works of his are appended.

His criticisms on English poets, not dramatists, are numerous. In our extracts from Mr. Collier's Preface, all such that he gives have been admitted, to secure them a permanent place. For the same reason, we here include the notes on Chaucer and Spenser, in the Lectures of 1818; and those on Milton, in the same Lectures, for a double reason, for they probably contain the substance of the missing lectures of 1811-12. Many criticisms on modern poets will be found in the "Table Talk," and in the "Biographia Literaria,"—on Bowles, Southey, and Wordsworth, mainly. These publications are easily accessible.

It may be added that Coleridge often repeats himself,—with variations. The substance of our quotation from the "Friend," for example, may be found in the "Essay on Method;" and Coleridge's ideas on poetry generally, in the lectures of 1811-12, and in those of 1818, are illustrated by similar ones in the "Biographia Literaria."

1. *The specific symptoms of poetic power elucidated in a critical analysis of Shakspere's "Venus and Adonis," and "Rape of Lucrece."* Chapter xv. of the "Biographia Literaria."

In the application of these principles to purposes of practical criticism as employed in the appraisal of works more or less imperfect, I have endeavoured to discover what the qualities in a poem are, which may be deemed

promises and specific symptoms of poetic power, as distinguished from general talent determined to poetic composition by accidental motives, by an act of the will, rather than by the inspiration of a genial and productive nature. In this investigation, I could not, I thought, do better, than keep before me the earliest work of the greatest genius, that perhaps human nature has yet produced, our *myriad-minded*[1] Shakspere. I mean the "Venus and Adonis," and the "Lucrece;" works which give at once strong promises of the strength, and yet obvious proofs of the immaturity, of his genius. From these I abstracted the following marks, as characteristics of original poetic genius in general.

1. In the "Venus and Adonis," the first and most obvious excellence is the perfect sweetness of the versification; its adaptation to the subject; and the power displayed in varying the march of the words without passing into a loftier and more majestic rhythm than was demanded by the thoughts, or permitted by the propriety of preserving a sense of melody predominant. The delight in richness and sweetness of sound, even to a faulty excess, if it be evidently original, and not the result of an easily imitable mechanism, I regard as a highly favourable promise in the compositions of a young man. "The man that hath not music in his soul" can indeed never be a genuine poet. Imagery (even taken from nature, much more when transplanted from books, as travels, voyages, and works of natural history); affecting incidents; just thoughts; interesting personal or domestic feelings; and with these the art of their combination or intertexture in the form of a poem; may all by incessant effort be acquired as a trade,

[1] Ἀνὴρ μυριόνους, a phrase which I have borrowed from a Greek monk, who applies it to a Patriarch of Constantinople. I might have said that I have reclaimed rather than borrowed it, for it seems to belong to Shakspere *de jure singulari, et ex privilegio naturæ*.—S. T. C.

by a man of talents and much reading, who, as I once before observed, has mistaken an intense desire of poetic reputation for a natural poetic genius; the love of the arbitrary end for a possession of the peculiar means. But the sense of musical delight, with the power of producing it, is a gift of imagination; and this, together with the power of reducing multitude into unity of effect, and modifying a series of thoughts by some one predominant thought or feeling, may be cultivated and improved, but can never be learnt. It is in these that "*Poeta nascitur non fit.*"

2. A second promise of genius is the choice of subjects very remote from the private interests and circumstances of the writer himself. At least I have found, that where the subject is taken immediately from the author's personal sensations and experiences, the excellence of a particular poem is but an equivocal mark, and often a fallacious pledge, of genuine poetic power.[1] We may perhaps remember the tale of the statuary, who had acquired considerable reputation for the legs of his goddesses, though the rest of the statue accorded but indifferently with ideal beauty; till his wife, elated by her husband's praises, modestly acknowledged that she herself had been his constant model. In the "Venus and Adonis," this proof of poetic power exists even to excess. It is throughout as if a superior spirit, more intuitive, more intimately conscious even than the characters themselves, not only of every outward look and act, but of the flux and reflux of the mind in all its subtlest thoughts and feelings, were placing the whole before our view: himself meanwhile unparticipating

[1] This is at least candid on the part of Coleridge, so many of whose own poems are of this private interpretation. On the other hand, he tells us, in the preface to the earlier editions of his poems: "If I could judge of others by myself, I should not hesitate to affirm, that the most interesting passages in all writings are those in which the author develops his own feelings." The statements are not antagonistic.

in the passions, and actuated only by that pleasurable excitement which had resulted from the energetic fervour of his own spirit, in so vividly exhibiting what it had so accurately and profoundly contemplated. I think I should have conjectured from these poems, that even then the great instinct which impelled the poet to the drama was secretly working in him, prompting him by a series and never-broken chain of imagery, always vivid, and because unbroken, often minute; by the highest effort of the picturesque in words, of which words are capable, higher perhaps than was ever realized by any other poet, even Dante not excepted; to provide a substitute for that visual language, that constant intervention and running comment by tone, look, and gesture, which, in his dramatic works, he was entitled to expect from the players. His Venus and Adonis seem at once the characters themselves, and the whole representation of those characters by the most consummate actors. You seem to be told nothing, but to see and hear everything. Hence it is, that from the perpetual activity of attention required on the part of the reader; from the rapid flow, the quick change, and the playful nature of the thoughts and images; and, above all, from the alienation, and, if I may hazard such an expression, the utter aloofness of the poet's own feelings from those of which he is at once the painter and the analyst; that though the very subject cannot but detract from the pleasure of a delicate mind, yet never was poem less dangerous on a moral account. Instead of doing as Ariosto, and as, still more offensively, Wieland has done; instead of degrading and deforming passion into appetite, the trials of love into the struggles of concupiscence, Shakspere has here represented the animal impulse itself, so as to preclude all sympathy with it, by dissipating the reader's notice among the thousand outward images, and now beautiful, now fanciful circumstances, which form its dresses and its

scenery; or by diverting our attention from the main subject by those frequent witty or profound reflections which the poet's ever active mind has deduced from, or connected with, the imagery and the incidents. The reader is forced into too much action to sympathize with the merely passive of our nature. As little can a mind thus roused and awakened be brooded on by mean and instinct emotion, as the low, lazy mist can creep upon the surface of a lake while a strong gale is driving it onward in waves and billows.

3. It has been before observed that images, however beautiful, though faithfully copied from nature, and as accurately represented in words, do not of themselves characterize the poet. They become proofs of original genius only as far as they are modified by a predominant passion; or by associated thoughts or images awakened by that passion; or when they have the effect of reducing multitude to unity, or succession to an instant; or lastly, when a human and intellectual life is transferred to them from the poet's own spirit,

> "Which shoots its being through earth, sea, and air."

In the two following lines, for instance, there is nothing objectionable, nothing which would preclude them from forming, in their proper place, part of a descriptive poem:

> "Behold yon row of pines, that shorn and bow'd
> Bend from the sea-blast, seen at twilight eve."

But with the small alteration of rhythm, the same words would be equally in their place in a book of topography, or in a descriptive tour. The same image will rise into a semblance of poetry if thus conveyed:

> "Yon row of bleak and visionary pines,
> By twilight-glimpse discerned, mark! how they flee
> From the fierce sea-blast, all their tresses wild
> Streaming before them."

I have given this as an illustration, by no means as an instance, of that particular excellence which I had in view,

and in which Shakspere, even in his earliest as in his latest works, surpasses all other poets. It is by this that he still gives a dignity and a passion to the objects which he presents. Unaided by any previous excitement, they burst upon us at once in life and in power.

> "Full many a glorious morning have I seen
> *Flatter* the mountain-tops with sovereign eye."
>
> *Shakspere's 33rd Sonnet.*

> "Not mine own fears, nor the prophetic soul
> Of the wide world dreaming on things to come—
> * * * * * *
> * * * * * *
> The mortal moon hath her eclipse endured,
> And the sad augurs mock their own presage:
> Incertainties now crown themselves assured,
> And peace proclaims olives of endless age.
> Now with the drops of this most balmy time
> My love looks fresh, and Death to me subscribes,
> Since, spite of him, I'll live in this poor rhyme,
> While he insults o'er dull and speechless tribes;
> And thou in this shalt find thy monument,
> When tyrants' crests, and tombs of brass are spent."
>
> *Sonnet* 107.

As of higher worth, so doubtless still more characteristic of poetic genius does the imagery become, when it moulds and colours itself to the circumstances, passion, or character, present and foremost in the mind. For unrivalled instances of this excellence, the reader's own memory will refer him to the "Lear," "Othello," in short to which not of the "*great, ever living, dead man's*" dramatic works? *Inopem me copia fecit.* How true it is to nature, he has himself finely expressed in the instance of love in Sonnet 98:

> "From you have I been absent in the spring,
> When proud-pied April dress'd in all his trim
> Hath put a spirit of youth in everything;
> That heavy Saturn laugh'd and leap'd with him.
> Yet nor the lays of birds, nor the sweet smell
> Of different flowers in odour and in hue,

Could make me any summer's story tell,
Or from their proud lap pluck them where they grew:
Nor did I wonder at the lily's white,
Nor praise the deep vermilion in the rose;
They were but sweet, but figures of delight,
Drawn after you, you pattern of all those.
Yet seem'd it winter still, and you away,
As with your shadow I with these did play!"

Scarcely less sure, or if a less valuable, not less indispensable mark

Γόνιμον μὲν Ποιητοῦ——————
——————*ὅστις ῥῆμα γενναῖον λάχοι,*

will the imagery supply, when, with more than the power of the painter, the poet gives us the liveliest image of succession with the feeling of simultaneousness!

"With this he breaketh from the sweet embrace
Of those fair arms, that bound him to her breast,
And homeward through the dark laund runs apace:
* * * * * *
Look how a bright star shooteth from the sky!
So glides he in the night from Venus' eye."

Venus and Adonis, l. 811.

4. The last character I shall mention, which would prove indeed but little, except as taken conjointly with the former; yet without which the former could scarce exist in a high degree, and (even if this were possible) would give promises only of transitory flashes and a meteoric power;—is depth and energy of thought. No man was ever yet a great poet, without being at the same time a profound philosopher. For poetry is the blossom and the fragrancy of all human knowledge, human thoughts, human passions, emotions, language. In Shakspere's Poems, the creative power and the intellectual energy wrestle as in a war embrace. Each in its excess of strength seems to threaten the extinction of the other. At length, in the drama they were reconciled, and fought each with its shield before the breast of the other. Or like two rapid streams that, at their first meet-

ing within narrow and rocky banks, mutually strive to repel each other, and intermix reluctantly and in tumult, but soon finding a wider channel and more yielding shores, blend and dilate, and flow on in one current and with one voice. The "Venus and Adonis" did not perhaps allow the display of the deeper passions. But the story of Lucretia seems to favour, and even demand, their intensest workings. And yet we find in Shakspere's management of the tale neither pathos nor any other dramatic quality. There is the same minute and faithful imagery as in the former poem, in the same vivid colours, inspirited by the same impetuous vigour of thought, and diverging and contracting with the same activity of the assimilative and of the modifying faculties; and with a yet larger display, a yet wider range of knowledge and reflection; and lastly, with the same perfect dominion, often domination, over the whole world of language. What, then, shall we say? even this, that Shakspere, no mere child of nature; no automaton of genius; no passive vehicle of inspiration possessed by the spirit, not possessing it; first studied patiently, meditated deeply, understood minutely, till knowledge, become habitual and intuitive, wedded itself to his habitual feelings; and at length gave birth to that stupendous power, by which he stands alone, with no equal or second in his own class; to that power which seated him on one of the two glory-smitten summits of the poetic mountain, with Milton as his compeer, not rival. While the former darts himself forth, and passes into all the forms of human character and passion, the one Proteus of the fire and the flood; the other attracts all forms and things to himself, into the unity of his own ideal. All things and modes of action shape themselves anew in the being of Milton; while Shakspere becomes all things, yet for ever remaining himself. O what great men hast thou not produced, England! my country! Truly, indeed,

"Must we be free or die, who speak the tongue,
Which Shakspere spake; the faith and morals hold,
Which Milton held. In everything we are sprung
Of earth's first blood, have titles manifold!"

WORDSWORTH.

II. *Shakspere's Method.* From the "Friend."

The difference between the products of a well disciplined and those of an uncultivated understanding, in relation to what we will now venture to call the *Science of Method*, is often and admirably exhibited by our great dramatist. We scarcely need refer our readers to the Clown's evidence, in the first scene of the second act of "Measure for Measure," or to the Nurse in "Romeo and Juliet." But not to leave the position, without an instance to illustrate it, we will take the "easy-yielding" Mrs. Quickly's relation of the circumstances of Sir John Falstaff's debt to her:—

"*Falstaff.* What is the gross sum that I owe thee?

Mrs. Quickly. Marry, if thou wert an honest man, thyself and the money too. Thou didst swear to me upon a parcel-gilt goblet, sitting in my Dolphin chamber, at the round table, by a sea-coal fire, on Wednesday in Whitsun week, when the prince broke thy head for liking his father to a singing man of Windsor—thou didst swear to me then, as I was washing thy wound, to marry me and make me my lady thy wife. Canst thou deny it? Did not goodwife Keech, the butcher's wife, come in then and call me gossip Quickly?—coming in to borrow a mess of vinegar: telling us she had a good dish of prawns—whereby thou didst desire to eat some—whereby I told thee they were ill for a green wound," &c. &c. &c.

Henry IV., Part II. Act II. Scene 1.

And this, be it observed, is so far from being carried beyond the bounds of a fair imitation, that "the poor soul's" thoughts and sentences are more closely interlinked than the truth of nature would have required, but that the connections and sequence, which the habit of method can alone give, have in this instance a substitute in the fusion of passion. For the absence of method, which characterizes

the uneducated, is occasioned by an habitual submission of the understanding to mere events and images as such, and independent of any power in the mind to classify or appropriate them. The general accompaniments of time and place are the only relations which persons of this class appear to regard in their statements. As this constitutes their leading feature, the contrary excellence, as distinguishing the well-educated man, must be referred to the contrary habit. Method, therefore, becomes natural to the mind which has been accustomed to contemplate not things only, or for their own sake alone, but likewise and chiefly the relations of things, either their relations to each other, or to the observer, or to the state and apprehension of the hearers. To enumerate and analyze these relations, with the conditions under which alone they are discoverable, is to teach the science of method.

The enviable results of this science, when knowledge has been ripened into those habits which at once secure and evince its possession, can scarcely be exhibited more forcibly as well as more pleasingly, than by contrasting with the former extract from Shakspere the narration given by Hamlet to Horatio of the occurrences during his proposed transportation to England, and the events that interrupted his voyage:—

"*Ham.* Sir, in my heart there was a kind of fighting,
That would not let me sleep: methought I lay
Worse than the mutines in the bilboes. Rashly,
And praised be rashness for it,——Let us know,
Our indiscretion sometimes serves us well,
When our deep plots do pall: and that should teach us,
There's a divinity that shapes our ends,
Rough-hew them how we will,——
Hor. That is most certain.
Ham. Up from my cabin,
My sea-gown scarf'd about me, in the dark
Groped I to find out them; had my desire,
Finger'd their packet; and, in fine, withdrew

To my[1] own room again: making so bold,
My fears forgetting manners, to unseal
Their grand commission; where I found, Horatio,
O royal knavery! an exact command,
Larded with many several sorts of reasons,
Importing Denmark's health, and England's too,
With, ho! such bugs and goblins in my life,
That on the supervise, no leisure bated,
No, not to stay the grinding of the axe,
My head should be struck off!
Hor. Is't possible?
Ham. Here's the commission.—Read it at more leisure."
Act V. Scene 2.

Here the events, with the circumstances of time and place, are all stated with equal compression and rapidity, not one introduced which could have been omitted without injury to the intelligibility of the whole process. If any tendency is discoverable, as far as the mere facts are in question, it is the tendency to omission; and, accordingly, the reader will observe that the attention of the narrator is afterwards called back to one material circumstance, which he was hurrying by, by a direct question from the friend to whom the story is communicated. "How was this sealed?" But by a trait which is indeed peculiarly characteristic of Hamlet's mind, ever disposed to generalize, and meditative to excess (but which, with due abatement and reduction, is distinctive of every powerful and methodizing intellect), all the digressions and enlargements consist of reflections, truths, and principles of general and permanent interest, either directly expressed or disguised in playful satire.

"——————I sat me down:
Devised a new commission; wrote it fair.
I once did hold it, as our statists do,
A baseness to write fair, and labour'd much
How to forget that learning; but, sir, now
It did me yeoman's service. Wilt thou know
The effect of what I wrote?

[1] Read "mine."

Hor. Aye, good my lord.

Ham. An earnest conjuration from the king,
As England was his faithful tributary;
As love between them, like the palm, might flourish:
As peace should still her wheaten garland wear,[1]
And many such like 'As'es of great charge—
That on the view and knowing of these contents,
He should the bearers put to sudden death,
Not shriving time allowed.

Hor. How was this seal'd?

Ham. Why, even in that was heaven ordinant.
I had my father's signet in my purse,
Which was the model of that Danish seal:
Folded the writ up in form of the other;
Subscribed it; gave't the impression; placed it safely,
The changeling never known. Now, the next day
Was our sea-fight; and what to this was sequent,
Thou knowest already.

Hor. So Guildenstern and Rosencrantz go to't?

Ham. Why, man, they did make love to this employment.
They are not near my conscience: their defeat
Doth by their own insinuation grow.
'Tis dangerous when the baser nature comes
Between the pass and fell incensed points
Of mighty opposites."

It would, perhaps, be sufficient to remark of the preceding passage, in connection with the humorous specimen of narration,

"Fermenting o'er with frothy circumstance,"

in Henry IV., that if overlooking the different value of matter in each, we considered the form alone, we should find both immethodical; Hamlet from the excess, Mrs. Quickly from the want, of reflection and generalization; and that method, therefore, must result from the due mean or balance between our passive impressions and the mind's

[1] Coleridge omits the next line—

"And stand a comma 'tween their amities,"

and also, after "these contents," the line—

"Without debatement further, more or less."

own reaction on the same. (Whether this reaction does not suppose or imply a primary act positively originating in the mind itself, and prior to the object in order of nature, though co-instantaneous in its manifestation, will be hereafter discussed.) But we had a further purpose in thus contrasting these extracts from our "myriad-minded bard" (*μυριονοῦς ἀνηρ*). We wished to bring forward, each for itself, these two elements of method, or (to adopt an arithmetical term) its two main factors.

Instances of the want of generalization are of no rare occurrence in real life; and the narrations of Shakspere's Hostess and the Tapster differ from those of the ignorant and unthinking in general by their superior humour, the poet's own gift and infusion, not by their want of method, which is not greater than we often meet with in that class of which they are the dramatic representatives. Instances of the opposite fault, arising from the excess of generalization and reflection in minds of the opposite class, will, like the minds themselves, occur less frequently in the course of our own personal experience. Yet they will not have been wanting to our readers, nor will they have passed unobserved, though the great poet himself (*ὁ τὴν ἑαυτοῦ ψυχὴν ὥσει ὕλην τινα ἀσώματον μορφαῖς ποικίλαις μορφώσας*[1]) has more conveniently supplied the illustrations. To complete, therefore, the purpose aforementioned, that of presenting each of the two components as separately as possible, we chose an instance in which, by the surplus of its own activity, Hamlet's mind disturbs the arrangement, of which that very activity had been the cause and impulse.

Thus exuberance of mind, on the one hand, interferes with the forms of method; but sterility of mind, on the other, wanting the spring and impulse to mental action, is wholly destructive of method itself. For in attending too

[1] (*Translation.*)—He that moulded his own soul, as some incorporeal material, into various forms.—THEMISTIUS.

exclusively to the relations which the past or passing events and objects bear to general truth, and the moods of his own thought, the most intelligent man is sometimes in danger of overlooking that other relation in which they are likewise to be placed to the apprehension and sympathies of his hearers. His discourse appears like soliloquy intermixed with dialogue. But the uneducated and unreflecting talker overlooks all mental relations, both logical and psychological; and consequently precludes all method that is not purely accidental. Hence the nearer the things and incidents in time and place, the more distant, disjointed, and impertinent to each other, and to any common purpose, will they appear in his narration; and this from the want of a staple, or starting-post, in the narrator himself; from the absence of the leading thought, which, borrowing a phrase from the nomenclature of legislation, we may not inaptly call the initiative. On the contrary, where the habit of method is present and effective, things the most remote and diverse in time, place, and outward circumstance, are brought into mental contiguity and succession, the more striking as the less expected. But while we would impress the necessity of this habit, the illustrations adduced give proof that in undue preponderance, and when the prerogative of the mind is stretched into despotism, the discourse may degenerate into the grotesque or the fantastical.

With what a profound insight into the constitution of the human soul is this exhibited to us in the character of the Prince of Denmark, where flying from the sense of reality, and seeking a reprieve from the pressure of its duties in that ideal activity, the overbalance of which, with the consequent indisposition to action, is his disease, he compels the reluctant good sense of the high yet healthful-minded Horatio, to follow him in his wayward meditation amid the graves! "To what base uses we may return,

Horatio. Why may not imagination trace the noble dust of Alexander, till he find it stopping a bung-hole? *Hor.* 'Twere to consider too curiously, to consider so. *Ham.* No, faith, not a jot; but to follow him thither with modesty enough, and likelihood to lead it. As thus: Alexander died, Alexander was buried, Alexander returneth to[1] dust—the dust is earth; of earth we make loam: and why of that loam, whereto he was converted, might they not stop a beer-barrel?

> "Imperial Cæsar, dead and turn'd to clay,
> Might stop a hole to keep the wind away!"
>
> *Act V., Sc.* 1.

But let it not escape our recollection, that when the objects thus connected are proportionate to the connecting energy, relatively to the real, or at least to the desirable sympathies of mankind; it is from the same character that we derive the genial method in the famous soliloquy, "To be? or not to be?" which, admired as it is, and has been, has yet received only the first-fruits of the admiration due to it.

We have seen that from the confluence of innumerable impressions in each moment of time the mere passive memory must needs tend to confusion—a rule, the seeming exceptions to which (the thunder-bursts in "Lear," for instance) are really confirmations of its truth. For, in many instances, the predominance of some mighty passion takes the place of the guiding thought, and the result presents the method of nature, rather than the habit of the individual. For thought, imagination (and we may add passion), are, in their very essence, the first, connective, the latter, co-adunative; and it has been shown, that if the excess lead to method misapplied, and to connections of the moment, the absence, or marked deficiency, either precludes method altogether, both form and sub-

[1] Read "into."

stance, or (as the following extract will exemplify) retains the outward form only.

> "My liege and madam, to expostulate
> What majesty should be, what duty is,
> Why day is day, night night, and time is time,
> Were nothing but to waste night, day and time.
> Therefore—since brevity is the soul of wit,
> And tediousness the limbs and outward flourishes,
> I will be brief. Your noble son is mad:
> Mad call I it—for, to define true madness,
> What is't, but to be nothing else but mad?
> But let that go.
> *Queen.* More matter with less art.
> *Pol.* Madam! I swear, I use no art at all.
> That he is mad, 'tis true: 'tis true, 'tis pity:
> And pity 'tis, 'tis true (a foolish figure!
> But farewell it, for I will use no art.)
> Mad let us grant him, then: and now remains,
> That we find out the cause of this effect,
> Or rather say the cause of this defect:
> For this effect defective comes by cause.
> Thus it remains, and the remainder thus.
> Perpend." *Hamlet, Act II., Sc.* 2.

Does not the irresistible sense of the ludicrous in this flourish of the soul-surviving body of old Polonius's intellect, not less than in the endless confirmations and most undeniable matters of fact, of Tapster Pompey or "the hostess of the tavern," prove to our feelings, even before the word is found which presents the truth to our understandings, that confusion and formality are but the opposite poles of the same null-point?

It is Shakspere's peculiar excellence, that throughout the whole of his splendid picture gallery (the reader will excuse the confessed inadequacy of this metaphor), we find individuality everywhere, mere portrait nowhere. In all his various characters, we still feel ourselves communing with the same human nature, which is everywhere present as the vegetable sap in the branches, sprays, leaves, buds,

blossoms, and fruits, their shapes, tastes, and odours. Speaking of the effect, *i.e.* his works themselves, we may define the excellence of their method as consisting in that just proportion, that union and interpenetration of the universal and the particular, which must ever pervade all works of decided genius and true science. For method implies a progressive transition, and it is the meaning of the word in the original language. The Greek Μέθοδος, is literally a way, or path of transit. Thus we extol the Elements of Euclid, or Socrates' discourse with the slave in the Menon, as methodical, a term which no one who holds himself bound to think or speak correctly would apply to the alphabetical order or arrangement of a common dictionary. But as, without continuous transition, there can be no method, so without a pre-conception there can be no transition with continuity. The term, method, cannot therefore, otherwise than by abuse, be applied to a mere dead arrangement, containing in itself no principle of progression.

III. *Notes on Chaucer and Spenser.* Remains of Lecture III. of the course of 1818.

CHAUCER.

Born in London, 1328.—Died 1400.[1]

Chaucer must be read with an eye to the Norman-French Trouveres, of whom he is the best representative in English. He had great powers of invention. As in Shakspere, his characters represent classes, but in a different manner;[2]

[1] From Mr. Green's note.—H. N. C. Mr. Green took notes of the course. We may recall Gillman's remark here: "The attempts to copy his lectures verbatim have failed, they are but comments."—*Life*, p. 336.

[2] See note to Lecture VI., 1811-12, p. 68.

Shakspere's characters are the representatives of the interior nature of humanity, in which some element has become so predominant as to destroy the health of the mind; whereas Chaucer's are rather representatives of classes of manners. He is therefore more led to individualize in a mere personal sense. Observe Chaucer's love of nature; and how happily the subject of his main work is chosen. When you reflect that the company in the Decameron have retired to a place of safety from the raging of a pestilence, their mirth provokes a sense of their unfeelingness; whereas in Chaucer nothing of this sort occurs, and the scheme of a party on a pilgrimage, with different ends and occupations, aptly allows of the greatest variety of expression in the tales.[1]

Spenser.

Born in London, 1553.—Died 1599.

There is this difference, among many others, between Shakspere and Spenser:—Shakspere is never coloured by the customs of his age; what appears of contemporary character in him is merely negative; it is just not something else. He has none of the fictitious realities of the classics, none of the grotesquenesses of chivalry, none of the allegory of the middle ages; there is no sectarianism either of politics or religion, no miser, no witch,—no common witch,—no astrology—nothing impermanent of however long duration; but he stands like the yew tree in Lorton vale, which has known so many ages that it belongs to none in particular; a living image of endless self-reproduction, like the immortal tree of Malabar. In Spenser

[1] "Through all the works of Chaucer there reigns a cheerfulness, a manly hilarity, which makes it almost impossible to doubt a correspondent habit of feeling in the author himself."—*Biographia Literaria*, chap. ii. See Appendix: V., *Mar.* 15, 1834.

the spirit of chivalry is entirely predominant, although with a much greater infusion of the poet's own individual self into it than is found in any other writer. He has the wit of the southern with the deeper inwardness of the northern genius.

No one can appreciate Spenser without some reflection on the nature of allegorical writing. The mere etymological meaning of the word, allegory,—to talk of one thing and thereby convey another,—is too wide. The true sense is this,—the employment of one set of agents and images to convey in disguise a moral meaning, with a likeness to the imagination, but with a difference to the understanding,—those agents and images being so combined as to form a homogeneous whole. This distinguishes it from metaphor, which is part of an allegory. But allegory is not properly distinguishable from fable, otherwise than as the first includes the second, as a genus its species; for in a fable there must be nothing but what is universally known and acknowledged, but in an allegory there may be that which is new and not previously admitted. The pictures of the great masters, especially of the Italian schools, are genuine allegories. Amongst the classics, the multitude of their gods either precluded allegory altogether, or else made everything allegory, as in the Hesiodic Theogonia; for you can scarcely distinguish between power and the personification of power. The Cupid and Psyche of, or found in, Apuleius, is a phænomenon. It is the platonic mode of accounting for the fall of man. The Battle of the Soul[1] by Prudentius is an early instance of Christian allegory.

Narrative allegory is distinguished from mythology as reality from symbol; it is, in short, the proper intermedium between person and personification. Where it is too strongly individualized, it ceases to be allegory; this is often felt in the "Pilgrim's Progress," where the characters

[1] Psychomachia.—H. N. C.

are real persons with nicknames. Perhaps one of the most curious warnings against another attempt at narrative allegory on a great scale, may be found in Tasso's account of what he himself intended in and by his "Jerusalem Delivered."

As characteristic of Spenser, I would call your particular attention in the first place to the indescribable sweetness and fluent projection of his verse, very clearly distinguishable from the deeper and more inwoven harmonies of Shakspere and Milton. This stanza is a good instance of what I mean:—

"Yet she, most faithfull ladie, all this while
Forsaken, wofull, solitarie mayd,
Far from all peoples preace, as in exile,
In wildernesse and wastfull deserts strayd
To seeke her knight; who, subtilly betrayd
Through that late vision which th' enchaunter wrought,
Had her abandond; she, of nought affrayd,
Through woods and wastnes wide him daily sought,
Yet wished tydinges none of him unto her brought."

F. Qu. B. I. c. 3. st. 3.

2. Combined with this sweetness and fluency, the scientific construction of the metre of the "Faery Queene" is very noticeable. One of Spenser's arts is that of alliteration, and he uses it with great effect in doubling the impression of an image:—

"In *w*ildernesse and *w*astful deserts,—"
* * * * *
"Through *w*oods and *w*astnes *w*ilde,—"
* * * *
"They passe the bitter waves of Acheron,
Where many soules sit *w*ailing *w*oefully,
And come to *f*iery *f*lood of *Ph*legeton,
Whereas the damned ghosts in torments fry,
And with *sh*arp, *sh*rilling *sh*rieks doth bootlesse cry,—" &c.

He is particularly given to an alternate alliteration, which is, perhaps, when well used, a great secret in melody:—

"A ramping lyon rushed suddenly,—

* * * * *

And sad to see her sorrowful constraint,

* * * * *

And on the grasse her daintie limbes did lay,—" &c.

You cannot read a page of the "Faery Queene," if you read for that purpose, without perceiving the intentional alliterativeness of the words; and yet so skilfully is this managed, that it never strikes any unwarned ear as artificial, or other than the result of the necessary movement of the verse.

3. Spenser displays great skill in harmonizing his descriptions of external nature and actual incidents with the allegorical character and epic activity of the poem. Take these two beautiful passages as illustrations of what I mean:—

"By this the northerne wagoner had set
His sevenfold teme behind the stedfast starre
That was in ocean waves yet never wet,
But firme is fixt, and sendeth light from farre
To all that in the wide deepe wandring arre;
And chearefull chaunticleare with his note shrill
Had warned once, that Phœbus' fiery carre
In hast was climbing up the easterne hill,
Full envious that Night so long his roome did fill;

When those accursed messengers of hell,
That feigning dreame, and that faire-forged spright
Came," &c.—B. I. c. 2. st. 1.

* * * * * *

"At last, the golden orientall gate
Of greatest Heaven gan to open fayre;
And Phœbus, fresh as brydegroome to his mate,
Came dauncing forth, shaking his deawie hayre;
And hurld his glistring beams through gloomy ayre.
Which when the wakeful Elfe perceiv'd, straightway
He started up, and did him selfe prepayre
In sunbright armes and battailons[1] array;
For with that Pagan proud he combat will that day."

Ib. c. 5. st. 2.

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[1] Read "battailous."

Observe also the exceeding vividness of Spenser's descriptions. They are not, in the true sense of the word, picturesque; but are composed of a wondrous series of images, as in our dreams. Compare the following passage with anything you may remember *in pari materia* in Milton or Shakspere:—

"His haughtie helmet, horrid all with gold,
Both glorious brightnesse and great terrour bredd,
For all the crest a dragon did enfold
With greedie pawes, and over all did spredd
His golden wings; his dreadfull hideous hedd,
Close couched on the bever, seemd to throw
From flaming mouth bright sparkles fiery redd,
That suddeine horrour to faint hartes did show;
And scaly tayle was stretcht adowne his back full low.

Upon the top of all his loftie crest
A bounch of haires discolourd diversly,
With sprinkled pearle and gold full richly drest,
Did shake, and seemed to daunce for jollitie;
Like to an almond tree ymounted hye
On top of greene Selinis all alone,
With blossoms brave bedecked daintily,
Whose tender locks do tremble every one
At everie little breath that under heaven is blowne."

Ib. c. 7. st. 31-2.

4. You will take especial note of the marvellous independence and true imaginative absence of all particular space or time in the "Faery Queene." It is in the domains neither of history or geography: it is ignorant of all artificial boundary, all material obstacles; it is truly in land of Faery, that is, of mental space. The poet has placed you in a dream, a charmed sleep, and you neither wish, nor have the power, to inquire where you are, or how you got there. It reminds me of some lines of my own:—

"Oh! would to Alla!
The raven or the sea-mew were appointed

To bring me food!—or rather that my soul
Might draw in life from the universal air!
It were a lot divine, in some small skiff,
Along some ocean's boundless solitude,
To float for ever with a careless course,
And think myself the only being alive!"

* *Remorse, Act IV., Sc. 3.*

Indeed Spenser himself, in the conduct of his great poem, may be represented under the same image, his symbolizing purpose being his mariner's compass:—

"As pilot well expert in perilous wave,
That to a stedfast starre his course hath bent,
When foggy mistes or cloudy tempests have
The faithfull light of that faire lampe yblent,
And coverd Heaven with hideous dreriment;
Upon his card and compas firmes his eye,
The maysters of his long experiment,
And to them does the steddy helme apply,
Bidding his winged vessell fairely forward fly."

B. II. c. 7. st. 1.

So the poet through the realms of allegory.

5. You should note the quintessential character of Christian chivalry in all his characters, but more especially in his women. The Greeks, except, perhaps, in Homer, seem to have had no way of making their women interesting, but by unsexing them, as in the instances of the tragic Medea, Electra, &c. Contrast such characters with Spenser's Una, who exhibits no prominent feature, has no particularization, but produces the same feeling that a statue does, when contemplated at a distance:—

"From her fayre head her fillet she undight,
And layd her stole aside: her angels face,
As the great eye of Heaven, shyned bright,
And made a sunshine in the shady place;
Did never mortal eye behold such heavenly grace."

B. I. c. 3. st. 4.

6. In Spenser we see the brightest and purest form of that nationality which was so common a characteristic of our elder poets. There is nothing unamiable, nothing contemptuous of others, in it. To glorify their country—to elevate England into a queen, an empress of the heart—this was their passion and object; and how dear and important an object it was or may be, let Spain, in the recollection of her Cid, declare! There is a great magic in national names. What a damper to all interest is a list of native East Indian merchants! Unknown names are non-conductors; they stop all sympathy. No one of our poets has touched this string more exquisitely than Spenser; especially in his chronicle of the British Kings (B. II. c. 10), and the marriage of the Thames with the Medway (B. IV. c. 11), in both which passages the mere names constitute half the pleasure we receive. To the same feeling we must in particular attribute Spenser's sweet reference to Ireland:—

> "Ne thence the Irishe rivers absent were;
> Sith no lesse famous than the rest they be," &c.—*Ib.*
>
> * * * * * *
>
> "And Mulla mine, whose waves I whilom taught to weep."—*Ib.*

And there is a beautiful passage of the same sort in the "Colin Clout's Come Home Again:"—

> "'One day,' quoth he, 'I sat, as was my trade,
> Under the foot of Mole,'" &c.

Lastly, the great and prevailing character of Spenser's mind is fancy under the conditions of imagination, as an ever present, but not always active power. He has an imaginative fancy, but he has not imagination, in kind or degree, as Shakspere and Milton have; the boldest effort of his powers in this way is the character of Talus.[1] Add

[1] B. 5. "Legend of Artegall."—H. N. C.

to this a feminine tenderness and almost maidenly purity of feeling, and above all, a deep moral earnestness which produces a believing sympathy and acquiescence in the reader, and you have a tolerably adequate view of Spenser's intellectual being.

IV. *Notes on Milton.* Remains of Lecture III. of the Course of 1818.[1]

MILTON.

Born in London, 1608.—Died, 1674.

If we divide the period from the accession of Elizabeth to the Protectorate of Cromwell into two unequal portions, the first ending with the death of James I. the other comprehending the reign of Charles and the brief glories of the Republic, we are forcibly struck with a difference in the character of the illustrious actors, by whom each period is rendered severally memorable. Or rather, the difference in the characters of the great men in each period, leads us to make this division. Eminent as the intellectual powers were that were displayed in both; yet in the number of great men, in the various sorts of excellence, and not merely in the variety but almost diversity of talents united in the same individual, the age of Charles falls short of its predecessor; and the stars of the Parliament, keen as their radiance was, in fulness and richness of lustre, yield to the constellation at the court of Elizabeth;—which can only be paralleled by Greece in her brightest moment, when the titles of the poet, the philosopher, the historian, the statesman and the general not seldom formed a garland round

[1] Mr. H. N. Coleridge appends to the remains of this lecture some notes on Milton from different sources. We have given them, so far as they concern us.

the same head, as in the instances of our Sidneys and Raleighs. But then, on the other hand, there was a vehemence of will, an enthusiasm of principle, a depth and an earnestness of spirit, which the charms of individual fame and personal aggrandizement could not pacify,—an aspiration after reality, permanence, and general good,—in short, a moral grandeur in the latter period, with which the low intrigues, Machiavellic maxims, and selfish and servile ambition of the former, stand in painful contrast.

The causes of this it belongs not to the present occasion to detail at length; but a mere allusion to the quick succession of revolutions in religion, breeding a political indifference in the mass of men to religion itself, the enormous increase of the royal power in consequence of the humiliation of the nobility and the clergy—the transference of the papal authority to the crown,—the unfixed state of Elizabeth's own opinions, whose inclinations were as popish as her interests were protestant—the controversial extravagance and practical imbecility of her successor—will help to explain the former period; and the persecutions that had given a life and soul interest to the disputes so imprudently fostered by James,—the ardour of a conscious increase of power in the commons, and the greater austerity of manners and maxims, the natural product and most formidable weapon of religious disputation, not merely in conjunction, but in closest combination, with newly awakened political and republican zeal, these perhaps account for the character of the latter æra.

In the close of the former period, and during the bloom of the latter, the poet Milton was educated and formed; and he survived the latter, and all the fond hopes and aspirations which had been its life; and so in evil days,[1]

[1] Coleridge is thinking of the passage,—

"Standing on earth, not rapt above the pole,
More safe I sing with mortal voice, unchanged

standing as the representative of the combined excellence of both periods, he produced the "Paradise Lost" as by an after-throe of nature. "There are some persons (observes a divine, a contemporary of Milton's) of whom the grace of God takes early hold, and the good spirit inhabiting them carries them on in an even constancy through innocence into virtue, their Christianity bearing equal date with their manhood, and reason and religion, like warp and woof, running together, make up one web of a wise and exemplary life. This (he adds) is a most happy case, wherever it happens; for besides that there is no sweeter or more lovely thing on earth than the early buds of piety, which drew from our Saviour signal affection to the beloved disciple, it is better to have no wound than to experience the most sovereign balsam, which, if it work a cure, yet usually leaves a scar behind." Although it was and is my intention to defer the consideration of Milton's own character to the conclusion of this Lecture, yet I could not prevail on myself to approach the "Paradise Lost" without impressing on your minds the conditions under which such a work was in fact producible at all, the original genius having been assumed as the immediate agent and efficient cause; and these conditions I find in the character of the times and in his own character. The age in which the foundations of his mind were laid, was congenial to it as one golden æra of profound erudition and individual genius;—that in which the superstructure was carried up, was no less favourable to it by a sternness of discipline and a show of self-control, highly flattering to the imaginative dignity of an heir of fame, and which won Milton

> To hoarse or mute, though fallen on evil days,
> On evil days though fallen, and evil tongues;
> In darkness, and with dangers compass'd round,
> And solitude."
>
> *Par. Lost.* vii. 23-8.

over from the dear-loved delights of academic groves and cathedral aisles to the anti-prelatic party. It acted on him, too, no doubt, and modified his studies by a characteristic controversial spirit (his presentation of God is tinted with it)—a spirit not less busy indeed in political than in theological and ecclesiastical dispute, but carrying on the former almost always, more or less, in the guise of the latter. And so far as Pope's censure [1] of our poet,—that he makes God the Father a school divine—is just, we must attribute it to the character of his age, from which the men of genius, who escaped, escaped by a worse disease, the licentious indifference of a Frenchified court.

Such was the *nidus* or soil, which constituted, in the strict sense of the word, the circumstances of Milton's mind. In his mind itself there were purity and piety absolute; an imagination to which neither the past nor the present were interesting, except as far as they called forth and enlivened the great ideal, in which and for which he lived; a keen love of truth, which, after many weary pursuits, found a harbour in a sublime listening to the still voice in his own spirit, and as keen a love of his country, which, after a disappointment still more depressive, expanded and soared into a love of man as a probationer of immortality. These were, these alone could be, the conditions under which such a work as the "Paradise Lost" could be conceived and accomplished. By a life-long study Milton had known—

> "What was of use to know,
> What best to say could say, to do had done.
> His actions to his words agreed, his words
> To his large heart gave utterance due, his heart
> Contain'd of good, wise, fair, the perfect shape;"

---

[1] See Appendix, V.: *Sept.* 4, 1833.

and he left the imperishable total, as a bequest to the ages coming, in the "Paradise Lost."[1]

Difficult as I shall find it to turn over these leaves without catching some passage, which would tempt me to stop, I propose to consider, 1st, the general plan and arrangement of the work;—2ndly, the subject with its difficulties and advantages;—3rdly, the poet's object, the spirit in the letter, the *ἐνθύμιον ἐν μύθῳ*, the true school-divinity; and lastly, the characteristic excellencies of the poem, in what they consist, and by what means they were produced.

1. As to the plan and ordonnance of the Poem.

Compare it with the "Iliad," many of the books of which might change places without any injury to the thread of the story. Indeed, I doubt the original existence of the "Iliad" as one poem; it seems more probable that it was put together about the time of the Pisistratidæ. The "Iliad"—and, more or less, all epic poems, the subjects of which are taken from history—have no rounded conclusion; they remain, after all, but single chapters from the volume of history, although they are ornamental chapters. Consider the exquisite simplicity of the "Paradise Lost." It and it alone really possesses a beginning, a middle, and an end; it has the totality of the poem as distinguished from the *ab ovo* birth and parentage, or straight line, of history.

2. As to the subject.

In Homer, the supposed importance of the subject, as the first effort of confederated Greece, is an after-thought of the critics; and the interest, such as it is, derived from the events themselves, as distinguished from the manner

[1] Here Mr. C. notes: "Not perhaps here, but towards, or as, the conclusion, to chastize the fashionable notion that poetry is a relaxation or amusement, one of the superfluous toys and luxuries of the intellect! To contrast the permanence of poems with the transiency and fleeting moral effects of empires, and what are called, great events."—H. N. C.

of representing them, is very languid to all but Greeks. It is a Greek poem. The superiority of the "Paradise Lost" is obvious in this respect, that the interest transcends the limits of a nation. But we do not generally dwell on this excellence of the "Paradise Lost," because it seems attributable to Christianity itself;—yet in fact the interest is wider than Christendom, and comprehends the Jewish and Mohammedan worlds;—nay, still further, inasmuch as it represents the origin of evil, and the combat of evil and good, it contains matter of deep interest to all mankind, as forming the basis of all religion, and the true occasion of all philosophy whatsoever.

The Fall of Man is the subject; Satan is the cause; man's blissful state the immediate object of his enmity and attack; man is warned by an angel who gives him an account of all that was requisite to be known, to make the warning at once intelligible and awful; then the temptation ensues, and the Fall; then the immediate sensible consequence; then the consolation, wherein an angel presents a vision of the history of men with the ultimate triumph of the Redeemer. Nothing is touched in this vision but what is of general interest in religion; anything else would have been improper.

The inferiority of Klopstock's "Messiah" is inexpressible. I admit the prerogative of poetic feeling, and poetic faith; but I cannot suspend the judgment even for a moment. A poem may in one sense be a dream, but it must be a waking dream. In Milton you have a religious faith combined with the moral nature; it is an efflux; you go along with it. In Klopstock there is a wilfulness; he makes things so and so. The feigned speeches and events in the "Messiah" shock us like falsehoods; but nothing of that sort is felt in the "Paradise Lost," in which no particulars, at least very few indeed, are touched which can come into collision or juxta-position with recorded matter.

But notwithstanding the advantages in Milton's subject, there were concomitant insuperable difficulties, and Milton has exhibited marvellous skill in keeping most of them out of sight. High poetry is the translation of reality into the ideal under the predicament of succession of time only. The poet is an historian, upon condition of moral power being the only force in the universe. The very grandeur of his subject ministered a difficulty to Milton. The statement of a being of high intellect, warring against the supreme Being, seems to contradict the idea of a supreme Being. Milton precludes our feeling this, as much as possible, by keeping the peculiar attributes of divinity less in sight, making them to a certain extent allegorical only. Again, poetry implies the language of excitement; yet how to reconcile such language with God? Hence Milton confines the poetic passion in God's speeches to the language of scripture; and once only allows the *passio vera*, or *quasi-humana* to appear, in the passage, where the Father contemplates his own likeness in the Son before the battle:—

> "Go then, thou Mightiest, in thy Father's might,
> Ascend my chariot, guide the rapid wheels
> That shake Heaven's basis, bring forth all my war,
> My bow and thunder; my almighty arms
> Gird on, and sword upon thy puissant thigh;
> Pursue these sons of darkness, drive them out
> From all Heaven's bounds into the utter deep:
> There let them learn, as likes them, to despise
> God and Messiah his anointed king."
>
> B. VI. v. 710-18.

3. As to Milton's object:—

It was to justify the ways of God to man! The controversial spirit observable in many parts of the poem, especially in God's speeches, is immediately attributable to the great controversy of that age, the origination of evil. The Arminians considered it a mere calamity. The Calvinists took away all human will. Milton asserted the

will, but declared for the enslavement of the will out of an act of the will itself. There are three powers in us, which distinguish us from the beasts that perish;—1, reason; 2, the power of viewing universal truth; and 3, the power of contracting universal truth into particulars. Religion is the will in the reason, and love in the will.

The character of Satan is pride and sensual indulgence, finding in self the sole motive of action. It is the character so often seen *in little* on the political stage. It exhibits all the restlessness, temerity, and cunning which have marked the mighty hunters of mankind from Nimrod to Napoleon. The common fascination of men is, that these great men, as they are called, must act from some great motive. Milton has carefully marked in his Satan the intense selfishness, the alcohol of egotism, which would rather reign in hell than serve in heaven. To place this lust of self in opposition to denial of self or duty, and to show what exertions it would make, and what pains endure to accomplish its end, is Milton's particular object in the character of Satan. But around this character he has thrown a singularity of daring, a grandeur of sufferance, and a ruined splendour, which constitute the very height of poetic sublimity.

Lastly, as to the execution:[1]—

The language and versification of the "Paradise Lost" are peculiar in being so much more necessarily correspondent to each than those in any other poem or poet. The connection of the sentences and the position of the words are exquisitely artificial; but the position is rather according to the logic of passion or universal logic, than to the logic of grammar. Milton attempted to make the English language obey the logic of passion as perfectly as the Greek and Latin. Hence the occasional harshness in the construction.

[1] See Appendix, V.: *May* 12, 1830.

Sublimity is the pre-eminent characteristic of the "Paradise Lost." It is not an arithmetical sublime like Klopstock's, whose rule always is to treat what we might think large as contemptibly small. Klopstock mistakes bigness for greatness. There is a greatness arising from images of effort and daring, and also from those of moral endurance; in Milton both are united. The fallen angels are human passions, invested with a dramatic reality.

The apostrophe to light at the commencement of the third book is particularly beautiful as an intermediate link between Hell and Heaven; and observe, how the second and third book support the subjective character of the poem. In all modern poetry in Christendom there is an under consciousness of a sinful nature, a fleeting away of external things, the mind or subject greater than the object, the reflective character predominant. In the "Paradise Lost" the sublimest parts are the revelations of Milton's own mind, producing itself and evolving its own greatness; and this is so truly so, that when that which is merely entertaining for its objective beauty is introduced, it at first seems a discord.

In the description of Paradise itself you have Milton's sunny side as a man; here his descriptive powers are exercised to the utmost, and he draws deep upon his Italian resources. In the description of Eve, and throughout this part of the poem, the poet is predominant over the theologian. Dress is the symbol of the Fall, but the mark of intellect; and the metaphysics of dress are, the hiding what is not symbolic and displaying by discrimination what is. The love of Adam and Eve in Paradise is of the highest merit—not phantomatic, and yet removed from everything degrading. It is the sentiment of one rational being towards another made tender by a specific difference in that which is essentially the same in both: it is a union of opposites, a giving and receiving mutually

of the permanent in either, a completion of each in the other.

Milton is not a picturesque, but a musical, poet; although he has this merit that the object chosen by him for any particular foreground always remains prominent to the end, enriched, but not incumbered, by the opulence of descriptive details furnished by an exhaustless imagination. I wish the "Paradise Lost" were more carefully read and studied than I can see any ground for believing it is, especially those parts which, from the habit of always looking for a story in poetry, are scarcely read at all,—as for example, Adam's vision of future events in the 11th and 12th books. No one can rise from the perusal of this immortal poem without a deep sense of the grandeur and the purity of Milton's soul, or without feeling how susceptible of domestic enjoyments he really was, notwithstanding the discomforts which actually resulted from an apparently unhappy choice in marriage. He was, as every truly great poet has ever been, a good man; but finding it impossible to realize his own aspirations, either in religion, or politics, or society, he gave up his heart to the living spirit and light within him, and avenged himself on the world by enriching it with this record of his own transcendant ideal.

NOTES ON MILTON. 1807.[1]

(Hayley quotes the following passage:—)

"Time serves not now, and, perhaps, I might seem too profuse to give any certain account of what the mind at home, in the spacious circuits of her musing, hath liberty to propose to herself, though of

[1] These notes were written by Mr. Coleridge in a copy of Hayley's "Life of Milton" (4to. 1796), belonging to Mr. Poole. By him they were communicated, and this seems the fittest place for their publication.—H. N. C.

highest hope and hardest attempting; whether that epic form, whereof the two poems of Homer, and those other two of Virgil and Tasso, are a diffuse, and *the Book of Job a brief, model.*" (p. 69.)

These latter words deserve particular notice. I do not doubt that Milton intended his "Paradise Lost" as an epic of the first class, and that the poetic dialogue of the Book of Job was his model for the general scheme of his "Paradise Regained." Readers would not be disappointed in this latter poem, if they proceeded to a perusal of it with a proper preconception of the kind of interest intended to be excited in that admirable work. In its kind it is the most perfect poem extant, though its kind may be inferior in interest—being in its essence didactic—to that other sort, in which instruction is conveyed more effectively, because less directly, in connection with stronger and more pleasurable emotions, and thereby in a closer affinity with action. But might we not as rationally object to an accomplished woman's conversing, however agreeably, because it has happened that we have received a keener pleasure from her singing to the harp? *Si genus sit probo et sapienti viro haud indignum, et si poema sit in suo genere perfectum, satis est. Quod si hoc auctor idem altioribus numeris et carmini divinitori ipsum per se divinum superaddiderit, mehercule satis est, et plusquam satis.* I cannot, however, but wish that the answer of Jesus to Satan in the 4th book (v. 285),—

> "Think not but that I know these things; or think
> I know them not, not therefore am I short
> Of knowing what I ought," &c.

had breathed the spirit of Hayley's noble quotation rather than the narrow bigotry of Gregory the Great. The passage is, indeed, excellent, and is partially true; but partial truth is the worst mode of conveying falsehood.

(Hayley, p. 250. Hayley's conjectures on the origin of the "Paradise Lost"):—

If Milton borrowed a hint from any writer, it was more probably from Strada's "Prolusions," in which the Fall of the Angels is pointed out as the noblest subject for a Christian poet.[1] The more dissimilar the detailed images are, the more likely it is that a great genius should catch the general idea.

(Bayl. p. 294. Extracts from the Adamo of Andreini:)

"*Lucifero.* Che dal mio centro oscuro
Mi chiama a rimirar cotanta luce?

Who from my dark abyss
Calls me to gaze on this *excess of light?*"

The words in italics are an unfair translation. They may suggest that Milton really had read and did imitate this drama. The original is "in so great light." Indeed the whole version is affectedly and inaccurately Miltonic.

Ib. v. 11. Che di fango opre festi—
Forming thy works of *dust* (no, dirt.—)

Ib. v. 17. Tessa pur stella a stella
V' aggiungo e luna, e sole.—

Let him unite above
Star upon star, moon, sun."

Let him weave star to star,
Then join both moon and sun!

"Ib. v. 21. Ch' al fin con biasmo e scorno
Vana l' opra sara, vano il sudore!

Since in the end division
Shall prove his works and all his efforts vain."

---

[1] The reference seems generally to be to the 5th Prolusion of the 1st Book. *Hic arcus ac tela, quibus olim in magno illo Superum tumultu princeps armorum Michael confixit auctorem proditionis; hic fulmina humanæ mentis terror. * * * In nubibus armatas bello legiones instruam, atque inde pro re nata auxiliares ad terram copias evocabo. * * * Hic mihi Cœlites, quos esse ferunt elementorum tutelares, prima illa corpora miscebunt.* Sect. 4.—H. N. C.

Since finally with censure and disdain
Vain shall the work be, and his toil be vain!

1796.[1]

The reader of Milton must be always on his duty: he is surrounded with sense; it rises in every line; every word is to the purpose. There are no lazy intervals; all has been considered, and demands and merits observation. If this be called obscurity, let it be remembered that it is such an obscurity as is a compliment to the reader; not that vicious obscurity, which proceeds from a muddled head.

V. *Extracts from the "Table Talk."*[2]

Othello.—"Othello must not be conceived as a negro, but a high and chivalrous Moorish chief. Shakspere learned the spirit of the character from the Spanish poetry, which was prevalent in England in his time.[3] Jealousy does not strike me as the point in his passion; I take it to be rather an agony that the creature, whom he had believed angelic, with whom he had garnered up his heart, and whom he could not help still loving, should be proved impure and worthless. It was the struggle *not* to love her. It was a moral indignation and regret that virtue should so fall:—'But yet the *pity* of it, Iago!—O Iago! the *pity* of it, Iago!' In addition to this, his honour was concerned:

[1] From a common-place book of Mr. C.'s, communicated by Mr. J. M. Gutch.—H. N. C.

[2] Also edited by H. N. Coleridge, Coleridge's son-in-law and nephew. Considering Coleridge's endless repetitions of himself, and not to overcrowd the text with notes, we have judged it better to delegate these criticisms to the Appendix.

[3] Caballeros Granadinos,
Aunque Moros, hijos d'algo.—H. N. C.

Iago would not have succeeded but by hinting that his honour was compromised. There is no ferocity in Othello; his mind is majestic and composed. He deliberately determines to die; and speaks his last speech with a view of showing his attachment to the Venetian state, though it had superseded him.

Schiller has the material Sublime;[1] to produce an effect, he sets you a whole town on fire, and throws infants with their mothers into the flames, or locks up a father in an old tower. But Shakspere drops a handkerchief, and the same or greater effects follow.

Lear is the most tremendous effort of Shakspere as a poet; Hamlet as a philosopher or meditater; and Othello is the union of the two. There is something gigantic and unformed in the former two; but in the latter, everything assumes its due place and proportion, and the whole mature powers of his mind are displayed in admirable equilibrium." —*Dec.* 29, 1822.

"I have often told you that I do not think there is any jealousy, properly so called, in the character of Othello. There is no predisposition to suspicion, which I take to be an essential term in the definition of the word. Desdemona very truly told Emilia that he was not jealous, that is, of a jealous habit, and he says so as truly of himself. Iago's suggestions, you see, are quite new to him; they do not correspond with anything of a like nature previously in his mind. If Desdemona had, in fact, been guilty, no one would have thought of calling Othello's conduct that of a jealous man. He could not act otherwise than he did with the lights he had; whereas jealousy can never be strictly right. See how utterly unlike Othello is to Leontes, in the

[1] This expression—"material Sublime"—like a hundred others which have slipped into general use, came originally from Mr. Coleridge, and was by him, in the first instance, applied to Schiller's "Robbers." —See Act iv., sc. 5.—H. N. C.

'Winter's Tale,' or even to Leonatus, in 'Cymbeline!' The jealousy of the first proceeds from an evident trifle, and something like hatred is mingled with it; and the conduct of Leonatus in accepting the wager, and exposing his wife to the trial, denotes a jealous temper already formed."—*June* 24, 1827.

Hamlet.—"Hamlet's character is the prevalence of the abstracting and generalizing habit over the practical. He does not want courage, skill, will, or opportunity; but every incident sets him thinking; and it is curious, and at the same time strictly natural, that Hamlet, who all the play seems reason itself, should be impelled, at last, by mere accident, to effect his object. I have a smack of Hamlet myself, if I may say so."—*June* 15, 1827.

Polonius.—"A Maxim is a conclusion upon observation of matters of fact, and is merely retrospective; an idea, or, if you like, a Principle, carries knowledge within itself, and is prospective. Polonius is a man of maxims. While he is descanting on matters of past experience, as in that excellent speech to Laertes before he sets out on his travels, he is admirable; but when he comes to advise or project, he is a mere dotard. You see Hamlet, as the man of ideas, despises him. A man of maxims only is like a Cyclops with one eye, and that eye placed in the back of his head."—*June* 15, 1827.

Hamlet and Ophelia.—"In the scene with Ophelia, in the third act, Hamlet is beginning with great and unfeigned tenderness; but perceiving her reserve and coyness, fancies there are some listeners, and then, to sustain his part, breaks out into all that coarseness."—*June* 15, 1827.

Measure for Measure.—"'Measure for Measure' is the single exception to the delightfulness of Shakspere's plays.

It is a hateful work, although Shaksperian throughout. Our feelings of justice are grossly wounded in Angelo's escape. Isabella herself contrives to be unamiable, and Claudio is detestable."—*June* 24, 1827.

The Fox.—"I am inclined to consider 'The Fox' as the greatest of Ben Jonson's works. But his smaller works are full of poetry."—*June* 24, 1827.

The Little French Lawyer.—"'Monsieur Thomas' and the 'Little French Lawyer' are great favourites of mine amongst Beaumont and Fletcher's plays. How those plays overflow with wit! And yet I scarcely know a more deeply tragic scene anywhere than that in 'Rollo,' in which Edith pleads for her father's life, and then, when she cannot prevail, rises up and imprecates vengeance on his murderer."—*June* 24, 1827.

Shakspere and Milton.—"Shakspere is the Spinozistic deity—an omnipresent creativeness. Milton is the deity of prescience; he stands *ab extra*, and drives a fiery chariot and four, making the horses feel the iron curb which holds them in. Shakspere's poetry is characterless; that is, it does not reflect the individual Shakspere; but John Milton himself is in every line of the "Paradise Lost." Shakspere's rhymed verses are excessively condensed,—epigrams with the point everywhere; but in his blank dramatic verse he is diffused, with a linked sweetness long drawn out. No one can understand Shakspere's superiority fully until he has ascertained, by comparison, all that which he possessed in common with several other great dramatists of his age, and has then calculated the surplus which is entirely Shakspere's own. His rhythm is so perfect, that you may be almost sure that you do not understand the real force of a line, if it does not run well as you read it. The necessary mental pause after every hemistich or imperfect line is

always equal to the time that would have been taken in reading the complete verse."—*May* 12, 1830.

Women.—"'Most women have no character at all,' said Pope, and meant it for satire. Shakspere, who knew man and woman much better, saw that it, in fact, was the perfection of woman to be characterless. Every one wishes a Desdemona or Ophelia for a wife,—creatures who, though they may not always understand you, do always feel you, and feel with you."—*Sept.* 27, 1830.

The style of Shakspere compared with that of Jonson and others.—"In the romantic drama Beaumont and Fletcher are almost supreme. Their plays are in general most truly delightful. I could read the 'Beggar's Bush' from morning to night. How sylvan and sunshiny it is! The 'Little French Lawyer' is excellent. 'Lawrit' is conceived and executed from first to last in genuine comic humour. 'Monsieur Thomas' is also capital. I have no doubt whatever that the first act and the first scene of the second act of the 'Two Noble Kinsmen' are Shakspere's. Beaumont and Fletcher's plots are, to be sure, wholly inartificial; they only care to pitch a character into a position to make him or her talk; you must swallow all their gross improbabilities, and, taking it all for granted, attend only to the dialogue. How lamentable it is that no gentleman and scholar can be found to edit these beautiful plays! Did the name of criticism ever descend so low as in the hands of those two fools and knaves, Seward and Simpson? There are whole scenes in their edition which I could with certainty put back into their original verse, and more that could be replaced in their native prose. Was there ever such an absolute disregard of literary fame as that displayed by Shakspere, and Beaumont and Fletcher?

In Ben Jonson you have an intense and burning art.

Some of his plots, that of the 'Alchemist,' for example, are perfect. Ben Jonson and Beaumont and Fletcher would, if united, have made a great dramatist indeed, and yet not have come near Shakspere; but no doubt Ben Jonson was the greatest man after Shakspere in that age of dramatic genius.

The styles of Massinger's plays and the 'Samson Agonistes' are the two extremes of the arc within which the diction of dramatic poetry may oscillate. Shakspere in his great plays is the midpoint. In the 'Samson Agonistes,' colloquial language is left at the greatest distance, yet something of it is preserved, to render the dialogue probable: in Massinger the style is differenced, but differenced in the smallest degree possible, from animated conversation by the vein of poetry.

There's such a divinity doth hedge our Shakspere round, that we cannot even imitate his style. I tried to imitate his manner in the 'Remorse,' and, when I had done, I found I had been tracking Beaumont and Fletcher, and Massinger instead. It is really very curious. At first sight, Shakspere and his contemporary dramatists seem to write in styles much alike: nothing so easy as to fall into that of Massinger and the others; whilst no one has ever yet produced one scene conceived and expressed in the Shaksperian idiom. I suppose it is because Shakspere is universal, and, in fact, has no *manner*; just as you can so much more readily copy a picture than Nature herself."—*Feb.* 17, 1833.

Plays of Massinger.—"The first act of the 'Virgin Martyr' is as fine an act as I remember in any play. The 'Very Woman' is, I think, one of the most perfect plays we have. There is some good fun in the first scene between Don John, or Antonio, and Cuculo, his master; and can anything exceed the skill and sweetness of the scene between

him and his mistress, in which he relates his story? The 'Bondman' is also a delightful play. Massinger is always entertaining; his plays have the interest of novels.

But, like most of his contemporaries, except Shakspere, Massinger often deals in exaggerated passion. Malefort senior, in the 'Unnatural Combat,' however he may have had the moral will to be so wicked, could never have actually done all that he is represented as guilty of, without losing his senses. He would have been, in fact, mad." —*April* 5, 1833.

Shakspere's Villains.—"Regan and Goneril are the only pictures of the unnatural in Shakspere—the pure unnatural; and you will observe that Shakspere has left their hideousness unsoftened or diversified by a single line of goodness or common human frailty. Whereas, in Edmund, for whom passion, the sense of shame as a bastard, and ambition, offer some plausible excuses, Shakspere has placed many redeeming traits. Edmund is what, under certain circumstances, any man of powerful intellect might be, if some other qualities and feelings were cut off. Hamlet is, inclusively, an Edmund, but different from him as a whole, on account of the controlling agency of other principles which Edmund had not.

It is worth while to remark the use which Shakspere always makes of his bold villains as vehicles for expressing opinions and conjectures of a nature too hazardous for a wise man to put forth directly as his own, or from any sustained character."—*April* 5, 1833.

Love's Labour's Lost.—"I think I could point out to a half line what is really Shakspere's in 'Love's Labour's Lost,' and some other of the not entirely genuine plays. What he wrote in that play is of his earliest manner, having the all-pervading sweetness which he never lost, and

that extreme condensation which makes the couplets fall into epigrams, as in the 'Venus and Adonis,' and 'Rape of Lucrece.' In the drama alone, as Shakspere soon found out, could the sublime poet and profound philosopher find the conditions of a compromise. In the 'Love's Labour's Lost' there are many faint sketches of some of his vigorous portraits in after life—as for example, in particular, of Benedict and Beatrice." [1]—*April* 7, 1833.

A Dramatist's Artifice.—"The old dramatists took great liberties in respect of bringing parties in scene together, and representing one as not recognizing the other under some faint disguise. Some of their finest scenes are constructed on this ground. Shakspere avails himself of this artifice only twice, I think,—in 'Twelfth Night,' where the two are with great skill kept apart till the end of the play; and in the 'Comedy of Errors,' which is a pure farce, and should be so considered. The definition of a farce is, an improbability or even impossibility granted in the outset; see what odd and laughable events will fairly follow from it!"—*April* 7, 1833.

Bertram.—"I cannot agree with the solemn abuse which the critics have poured out upon Bertram in, 'All's Well that Ends Well.' He was a young nobleman in feudal times, just bursting into manhood, with all the feelings of pride of birth and appetite for pleasure and liberty natural to such a character so circumstanced. Of course, he had never regarded Helena otherwise than as a dependant in the family; and of all that which she possessed of goodness and fidelity and courage, which might atone for her in-

[1] Mr. Coleridge, of course, alluded to Biron and Rosaline; and there are other obvious prolusions, as the scene of the masque with the courtiers, compared with the play in "A Midsummer Night's Dream." —H. N. C.

feriority in other respects, Bertram was necessarily in a great measure ignorant. And after all, her *primâ facie* merit was the having inherited a prescription from her old father the doctor, by which she cures the king,—a merit which supposes an extravagance of personal loyalty in Bertram to make conclusive to him in such a matter as that of taking a wife. Bertram had surely good reason to look upon the king's forcing him to marry Helena as a very tyrannical act. Indeed, it must be confessed that her character is not very delicate, and it required all Shakspere's consummate skill to interest us for her; and he does this chiefly by the operation of the other characters,—the Countess, Lafeu, &c. We get to like Helena from their praising and commending her so much."—*July* 1, 1833.

Beaumont and Fletcher's Tragedies.—"In Beaumont and Fletcher's tragedies the comic scenes are rarely so interfused amidst the tragic as to produce a unity of the tragic on the whole, without which the intermixture is a fault. In Shakspere, this is always managed with transcendent skill. The Fool in 'Lear' contributes in a very sensible manner to the tragic wildness of the whole drama. Beaumont and Fletcher's serious plays or tragedies are complete hybrids,—neither fish nor flesh,—upon any rules, Greek, Roman, or Gothic; and yet they are very delightful notwithstanding. No doubt, they imitate the ease of gentlemanly conversation better than Shakspere, who was unable *not* to be too much associated to succeed perfectly in this."—*July* 1, 1833.

Milton's Egotism.—"In the 'Paradise Lost'—indeed in every one of his poems—it is Milton himself whom you see; his Satan, his Adam, his Raphael, almost his Eve—are all John Milton; and it is a sense of this intense egotism that gives me the greatest pleasure in reading

Milton's works. The egotism of such a man is a revelation of spirit."—*Aug.* 18, 1833.

Milton's Method in "Paradise Lost."—"In my judgment, an epic poem must either be national or mundane. As to Arthur, you could not by any means make a poem on him national to Englishmen. What have *we* to do with him? Milton saw this, and with a judgment at least equal to his genius, took a mundane theme—one common to all mankind. His Adam and Eve are all men and women inclusively. Pope satirizes Milton for making God the Father talk like a school divine.[1] Pope was hardly the man to criticize Milton. The truth is, the judgment of Milton in the conduct of the celestial part of his story is very exquisite. Wherever God is represented as directly acting as Creator, without any exhibition of his own essence, Milton adopts the simplest and sternest language of the Scriptures. He ventures upon no poetic diction, no amplification, no pathos, no affection. It is truly the voice of the Word of the Lord coming to, and acting on, the subject Chaos. But, as some personal interest was demanded for the purposes of poetry, Milton takes advantage of the dramatic representation of God's address to the Son, the Filial Alterity, and in *those addresses* slips in, as it were by stealth, language of affection, or thought, or sentiment. Indeed, although Milton was undoubtedly a high Arian in his mature life, he does in the necessity of poetry give a greater objectivity to the Father and the Son, than he would have justified in argument. He was very wise in adopting the strong anthropomorphism of the Hebrew

[1] "Milton's strong pinion now not Heav'n can bound,
Now, serpent-like, in prose he sweeps the ground;
In quibbles angel and archangel join,
And God the Father turns a school divine."
HOR., Book II., Ep. i., 99.—H. N. C.

Scriptures at once. Compare the 'Paradise Lost' with Klopstock's 'Messiah,' and you will learn to appreciate Milton's judgment and skill quite as much as his genius." —*Sept.* 4, 1833.

Chaucer.—"I take unceasing delight in Chaucer. His manly cheerfulness is especially delicious to me in my old age.[1] How exquisitely tender he is, and yet how perfectly free from the least touch of sickly melancholy or morbid drooping! The sympathy of the poet with the subjects of his poetry is particularly remarkable in Shakspere and Chaucer; but what the first effects by a strong act of imagination and mental metamorphosis, the last does without any effort, merely by the inborn kindly joyousness of his nature. How well we seem to know Chaucer! How absolutely nothing do we know of Shakspere!

I cannot in the least allow any necessity for Chaucer's poetry, especially the 'Canterbury Tales,' being considered obsolete. Let a few plain rules be given for sounding the final *e* of syllables, and for expressing the termination of such words as *océan*, and *nation*, &c., as dissyllables,—or let the syllables to be sounded in such cases be marked by a competent metrist. This simple expedient would, with a very few trifling exceptions, where the errors are inveterate, enable any reader to feel the perfect smoothness and harmony of Chaucer's verse. As to understanding his language, if you read twenty pages with a good glossary, you surely can find no further difficulty, even as it is; but I should have no objection to see this done:—Strike out those words which are now obsolete, and I will venture to say that I will replace every one of them by words still in

[1] Eighteen years before, Mr. Coleridge entertained the same feelings towards Chaucer.—H. N. C. The editor of the "Table Talk" here quotes the passage, from the "Biographia Literaria," which we have given in a note, Appendix: III.

use out of Chaucer himself, or Gower his disciple. I don't want this myself: I rather like to see the significant terms which Chaucer unsuccessfully offered as candidates for admission into our language; but surely so very slight a change of the text may well be pardoned, even by black-*letterati*, for the purpose of restoring so great a poet to his ancient and most deserved popularity."—*Mar.* 15, 1834.

Shakspere of no Age.—"Shakspere is of no age. It is idle to endeavour to support his phrases by quotations from Ben Jonson, Beaumont and Fletcher, &c. His language is entirely his own, and the younger dramatists imitated him. The construction of Shakspere's sentences, whether in verse or prose, is the necessary and homogeneous vehicle of his peculiar manner of thinking. His is not the style of the age. More particularly, Shakspere's blank verse is an absolutely new creation. Read Daniel[1]—the admirable Daniel—in his 'Civil Wars,' and 'Triumphs of Hymen.' The style and language are just such as any very pure and manly writer of the present day—Wordsworth, for example—would use; it seems quite modern in comparison with the style of Shakspere. Ben Jonson's blank verse is very masterly and individual, and perhaps Massinger's is even still nobler. In Beaumont and Fletcher it is constantly slipping into lyricisms.

I believe Shakspere was not a whit more intelligible in

[1] "This poet's well-merited epithet is that of the '*well-languaged Daniel*,' but, likewise, and by the consent of his contemporaries, no less than all succeeding critics, the 'prosaic Daniel.' Yet those who thus designate this wise and amiable writer, from the frequent incorrespondency of his diction with his metre, in the majority of his compositions, not only deem them valuable and interesting on other accounts, but willingly admit that there are to be found throughout his poems, and especially in his 'Epistles' and in his 'Hymen's Triumph,' many and exquisite specimens of that style, which, as the neutral ground of prose and verse, is common to both."—*Biog. Lit.*, vol. ii., p. 82.—H. N. C.

his own day than he is now to an educated man, except for a few local allusions of no consequence. As I said, he is of no age—nor, I may add, of any religion, or party, or profession. The body and substance of his works came out of the unfathomable depths of his own oceanic mind: his observation and reading, which was considerable, supplied him with the drapery of his figures."—*Mar.* 15, 1834.

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